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# FINANCIAL TIMES

Wednesday July 15 1992

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## Mitterrand says EC in balance over Maastricht

A French vote against the Maastricht Treaty in the country's September 29 referendum would break up the European Community, President François Mitterrand warned. Page 16; Europe bares its claws, Page 15.

**Future of BR's UK government** plans for the future of British Rail involve splitting it in two, with one part owning the tracks and the other running the trains. Freight services will then be sold, but passenger services will be contracted out. Page 6; Editorial Comment, Page 14; Lex, Page 16.

**Ex-Italian foreign minister faces probe.** Former Italian foreign minister Gianni de Michelis is to be investigated by Venice magistrates over alleged corruption involving public works contracts. Mr de Michelis, leading Socialist figure in the Veneto region, said he would defend himself vigorously. Page 15.

**Belgrade's PM:** The federal parliament in Belgrade installed American millionaire Milan Panic as the first prime minister of the new Yugoslavia, comprising Serbia and Montenegro. Page 3.

**More tests for Popes** A "triumphant" second day of hospital tests in Rome for an intestinal disorder. The Vatican would not comment on reports that he has a tumour in the colon. Picture, Page 2.

**Botha to offer new policies** South African foreign minister Piki Botha is expected to announce measures designed to break the stalemate in constitutional talks when he addresses the United Nations security council tonight. Page 8; Editorial Comment, Page 14.

**Broking earnings falls** First signs of a slowdown in business on Wall Street appeared when two of the biggest broking houses, Merrill Lynch and Paine Webber, reported second-quarter earnings below record levels achieved in the first three months of the year. Page 17.

**Perot campaign falters** Democrats and Republicans are speculating that Ross Perot will not launch his independent run for the US presidency amid signs of disarray in the Texan "billionaire" camp. Page 28.

**Politician's escapade** Greek finance minister Ioannis Paleokrassas and his family escaped unhurt when a rocket was fired at their car in central Athens, but a passer-by was killed. Leftwing terrorist group November 17 is thought to be responsible.

**New chief for BA:** Lord King handed over command of British Airways to his deputy, Sir Colin Marshall, after 11 years as head of the airline. Page 17.

**Buyers' market for aircraft:** A world glut of passenger aircraft is sending aircraft prices diving and threatening expansion plans of aircraft makers, airlines and aircraft leasing companies. Page 7.

**Alcan's losses deepen** Excess supplies squeezed Montreal-based aluminium producer Alcan's margins and contributed to a second-quarter loss of US\$27m, compared with US\$15m a year earlier. Page 20.

**Hunt for PVC cartel:** The European Commission is investigating an alleged cartel in the European PVC industry, less than four years after fining 14 plastics manufacturers for price-fixing in the same market. Page 2.

**UK institutions seek rights:** UK institutional investors have asked European stock exchanges to lift rules which limit shareholders' ability to obtain information about companies and influence management. Page 17.

**Honeywell raises incomes** Honeywell, US controls systems company, reported a 10 per cent increase in second quarter net income to \$85.1m, due largely to gains from settlements in a long-running dispute over camera technology. Page 19.

**Army families die:** Nineteen people were killed when an aircraft carrying the families of Russian soldiers crashed and caught fire after take-off from Nakhichevani in Azerbaijan.

**Roubles rumbled:** Lucerne police arrested a Russian man who used practically valueless one-rouble coins in ticket machines instead of five-franc pieces worth R500 (US\$75) at the official rate. The change came out in hard currency.

## German rate policy backed by OECD

By Christopher Parkes  
in Bonn

**GERMANY'S** hardline interest rate policy has won unconditional backing from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The Bundesbank should keep rates high for as long as necessary to bring inflation down to the target of 2 per cent or less, the Paris-based institution says in its latest economic survey.

There is no need for action to counter recent rapid expansion of German "money supply", the OECD adds.

The report, released conveniently to feature in the media the day before the independent central bank's council is due to review its monetary targets, will further demoralise European Community members lobbying for German interest rate cuts to help them out of recession.

It could also undermine the position of bank council members such as Mr Lothar Müller, president of the Bavarian state bank, who are lobbying hard for tighter monetary controls.

The Bundesbank itself sent out further signals yesterday that it would not be hustled by partners in the European Monetary System into relaxing its interest rate stance.

It was understandable that others might want lower interest rates, the bank said in its latest monthly report, but it did not follow that the use of "suitable counter-measures" should be hindered in countries facing "intolerable" price inflation.

The bank was maintaining its position in the interests of Europe, the report claimed. The D-Mark was the anchor of the EMS and any lessening of its stability would make the conditions for economic and monetary union more difficult to achieve in several countries.

Money supply figures for May, confirmed without comment yesterday in the Bundesbank report,

show the broad M3 measure growing at 9 per cent year-on-year, compared with the target of 3.5-5 per cent.

A temporary above-target monetary expansion would not seem to call for further tightening of monetary conditions, but there should be no let-up in the pursuit of lower inflation, even if

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Inflation in western Germany will fall from 4.3 per cent now to between 3 per cent and 3.5 per cent in the second half of this year, it adds.

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## NEWS: EUROPE

# Italy reveals 'sweeping' privatisation

By Robert Graham in Rome

THE Italian government's privatisation plans are more sweeping than first announced, according to Prof Giuseppe Guarino, the new industry minister.

The government has set no limit on the shareholdings in individual companies that can be sold to private investors, he told the Financial Times yesterday. But the government is limiting to 45 per cent the stakes to be sold off in two special holdings - containing the assets of the state industrial and financial entities brought under the wing of the Treasury as a result of last Friday's emergency budget.

"Since last Friday, we are now thinking differently," he said. The public sector deficit meant the state could not bail out industry and even if it could this was against Italy's commitments to the EC, he added.

As at Monday, the following concerns have come under the control of the Treasury and have become joint stock companies: IRI, the main state holding company; ENI, the state oil company; ENEL, the electricity authority, and INA, the insurance institute. IRI, ENI and ENEL employ 550,000 people and have a combined turnover of nearly L150,000bn (270.3bn), with debts close to L80,000bn.

The Treasury under Mr Piero Barucci, a former banker, will be responsible for financial control and the Ministry of Industry for industrial strategy. However, the team co-ordinating privatisation includes the Christian Democrat and former finance minister, Mr Giovanni Gorla, and Prof Franco Reviglio at the budget ministry. Mr Reviglio is a former finance minister and head of ENI.

Within the next two weeks the government will create two "mother holdings". These will combine the four joint stock

companies plus the Treasury's holdings in the commercial bank, BNL, and the banking and finance group, IMI. It will be decided this week whether the holdings will be divided between industry and financial interests.

Much depends on whether IRI's controlling interests in the banks Comit, Banca di Roma and Credop are hived off. But the aim is to have the total assets, provisionally estimated at L80,000bn, in broadly similar quantities in each of the two holdings. Prof Guarino insists they will be debt free but it has yet to decide how to treat existing liabilities.

Before the end of 1992, the two new holdings will issue bonds to be underwritten by a consortium of banks. These should be convertible into shares with tax incentives on a sliding scale. Private stakes in the holdings will be limited to 45 per cent.

But Prof Guarino insists there is no limit on the percentage of shares to be sold in subsidiaries. This will be determined by the companies themselves. A possible administrator of the two "mother holdings" is Prof Romano Prodi, former head of IRI.

The heads of IRI, ENI and ENEL have welcomed the measures, although previously strong supporters of public sector enterprise. If market criteria are to prevail it is unlikely that the politicised boards of the companies can remain as before. Unlike previous industry ministers, Prof Guarino rejects the idea of strategic sectors. He says the single European market and increased competition have rendered this an outdated concept.

In a remarkable turnaround for a government which previously viewed Sir Leon Brittan, the EC competition commissioner, as a scourge, Prof Guarino claims: "We ought to be thankful to Mr Brittan because he has made us realise we have to change".



Nuns kneel in front of the Gemelli hospital in Rome yesterday to pray for the health of Pope John Paul II. The pontiff is undergoing hospital tests for an intestinal complaint and doctors say surgery cannot yet be ruled out.

## OECD takes heat off Bundesbank

By Christopher Parkes

in Bonn

GERMAN money supply, the supposed hot potato, is being jugged at the Bundesbank council meeting in Frankfurt tomorrow, seems not so hot after all now that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's latest economic survey of Germany has handed it with cool detachment.

The currently rapid money and credit growth has given rise to concern that if it continues, it may impair the credibility of the monetary authorities by allowing inflationary pressure and expectations to remain strong," the report says.

Meanwhile, it adds, the interest rates screw must be held down until inflation rates respond. Making no mention of the impact of the maintenance of existing high rates on Germany's partners in the European Monetary System - Bundesbank policy has been under persistent fire as the main dampening influence on the broad M3 measure - 9 per cent annualised in May compared with the Bundesbank's 3.5 per cent to 5.5 per cent target range.

To paraphrase the report's delicate language, it says that, since reconstruction of the wrecked eastern economy has increased calls on every conceivable west German

resource, it is hardly surprising that money is in demand.

There is also evidence of D-Mark hoarding and demand from neighbouring Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where the hardest currency in Europe is widely preferred to the softer local alternatives.

The Paris-based organisation believes accordingly: "A temporary above-target monetary expansion would not seem to call for further tightening of monetary conditions".

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The OECD notes that the speed at which policy decisions had to be made and implemented has introduced inefficiencies and distortions, particularly in the labour market. It

### GERMAN ECONOMY: OECD PROJECTIONS TO 1993 AT CONSTANT 1991 PRICES (DMbn)

	Germany	VOLUME CHANGES PER CENT					
		West	East	Germany			
1991	Total	Germany	Total	1992 1993 1992 1993 1992 1993			
Private consumption	1,575.4	1.2	2.4	5.0	3.0	1.6	2.5
Public consumption	559.5	1.5	1.2	4.0	2.0	0.6	1.3
Total investment	653.6	1.6	2.5	13.7	4.5	4.3	2.8
Machinery, equipment	642.1	0.1	3.4	35.0	18.0	4.2	5.8
Construction	299.7	3.0	2.2	20.0	9.0	4.8	3.0
Change in stocks	11.5	0.0	0.0	-1.0	2.3	-0.1	0.1
Total domestic demand	2,738.5	1.3	2.2	6.7	6.6	2.0	2.8
Foreign balance	19.8	0.2	0.4	-5.3	-0.2	0.0	0.0
Exports	824.0	3.7	5.1	20.3	15.0	3.5	5.8
Imports	804.1	4.1	5.2	9.5	7.0	4.3	5.4
GNP	2,808.3	1.3	2.3	7.5	9.0	1.8	2.5

suggests that transfers to the east, equivalent to 26 per cent of western GNP, may be in danger of generating negative incentive effects.

"Expenditure on income support that does not produce real investment in human or physical capital will tend to weaken economic incentives and discourage initiative in the new states," it warns.

Job-creation schemes, for example, which are funded by the labour office and pay relatively high wages, are often involved in clean-up and industrial renovation work which could be carried out by private enterprise.

Meanwhile, other workers are being paid too much, the study says. Wage deals in 1990 and 1991, in which many eastern German employees were promised pay parity by 1994, took no account of the labour situation in the eastern Länder. Last year's deals should now be renegotiated.

## EC in new PVC cartel inquiry

By Andrew Hill in Brussels and Paul Abrahams in London

The European Commission is again investigating an alleged cartel in the European PVC industry, less than four years after fining 14 plastics manufacturers for price-fixing.

Commission officials confirmed yesterday that some of the same companies were implicated in the new investigation, which began last week with two days of dawn raids across the Community. The groups raided include Norsk Hydro, EVC, a joint venture between ICI and Enichem, Elf Atochem, Shell, Wacker Chemie, Hüls and LVM. Officials said this was "a separate inquiry covering a separate period".

The PVC market, like much of the commodity plastics sector, is highly unprofitable at the moment. The industry sup-

plies the depressed vehicle and construction sectors and prices have declined steadily over the last 12 months. Manufacturing is a continuous process and stocks have been building up throughout Europe.

The groups have been seeking ways of increasing margins and have taken every opportunity to raise prices, although they have had difficulty avoiding discounting. All deny collusion.

The first investigation ended in 1988 with the Commission imposed fines of Ecu24m (£17m) on the 14 PVC-makers.

The legality of those fines is still in question, however, following a landmark ruling by the EC's lower judicial body in February. The Court of First Instance annulled the fines on the grounds that the Commission had broken its own internal rules. Brussels is to appeal against the CFI ruling.

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## NEWS: EUROPE

# Belgrade's new PM pledges to end war

By Laura Silber in Belgrade

Mr Milan Panic, an American businessman born in Belgrade, was sworn in as prime minister of Yugoslavia yesterday after pledging to end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr Panic said he would act as his own defence minister, which western diplomats saw as a sign that he planned to try and end bloodshed in Bosnia by maintaining full control over the army.

The new prime minister is now on a collision course with Mr Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian president, who backs Serb forces fighting in Bosnia and appears to support a command economy.

One western diplomat said Mr Panic was making an effort to pull Serbia out of its international isolation, caused by its aggression in Bosnia and its attitude to its own ethnic minorities.

In an address to the Yugoslav parliament, Mr Panic said his government had four aims: to stop the war, and establish a lasting peace in Bosnia, to create the conditions for a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

## Snipers 'firing on aid convoys to Sarajevo'

SNIPERS around the besieged city of Sarajevo are firing on ambulances and aircraft carrying relief supplies to the Bosnian capital, a United Nations agency said yesterday, Reuters reports.

"People are taking pot-shots at anything with 'humanitarian' written on it," Ms Sylvana Fox, of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said in Geneva.

Ms Fox said aircraft landing at Sarajevo's airport with relief supplies for the city's estimated 300,000 inhabitants "are taking hits as they come in".

"A bullet shattered the window of one ambulance right by the head of one of our people

who was riding in it," she said.

Sarajevo has been under siege since April from Bosnian Serbs opposed to the republic's independence. UN peacekeepers in Sarajevo yesterday accused both Serbs and the Croat and Moslem forces which oppose them of ceasefire violations hours after mortar bombs landed near their headquarters.

In another incident, UN troops returned fire and killed a Serb sniper who slightly wounded a Canadian soldier at Sarajevo airport, a UN spokesman said.

He added that a record 25 relief flights to Sarajevo were expected yesterday.

to introduce freedom of the press, and to revive the economy.

He called for the demilitarisation of Bosnia and the disarming of all forces in the republic under the auspices of the United Nations.

He said that he respected Bosnia's independence and called for the re-establishment of transport, communications and postal connections with the other former Yugoslav republics.

The parliament, dominated by Socialist (former Communists) deputies, gave the 62-year-old pharmaceutical magnate a mixed reception, some attacking him for a lack of patriotism. The ruling Socialists have repeatedly attacked opposition leaders as traitors to Serbia.

Mr Panic responded by saying he was a patriot. "Democracy is not only the respect for your opinion it is the respect for different opinions. We will not discuss the sanctions any more - about who is guilty and who is not. But we will work on lifting them," he said.

He called for the establishment of a financial stabilisation

As thousands flee fighting, Croatia foists problem on to international community

# Help plea as refugee crisis swells

By Our Foreign Staff

AUSTRIA and Hungary yesterday appealed for international help over the worsening central European refugee crisis after Croatia said it would not accept any more people fleeing the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Croatia said it would not close its border with Bosnia but all new arrivals would be transported directly to the borders of its northern neighbours, Slovenia, Austria and Italy.

"Foreign countries are not willing to open their borders and want to turn Croatia into a refugee centre," a government statement said.

Croatia is on the verge of social and economic collapse and there is not enough understanding or help from the international community."

Refugees from the war in Bosnia, which has killed at least 7,500 people and left thousands more missing, have flooded into Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Austria and Hungary. Tens of thousands more remain trapped in Bosnia by the fighting.

Croatia's inland cities and coastal resorts have been overrun by displaced persons and tent settlements have sprung up in several parts of the former Yugoslav republic.

The government said refugee camps would now serve only as transit centres and that the new ruling would be enforced by the interior ministry.

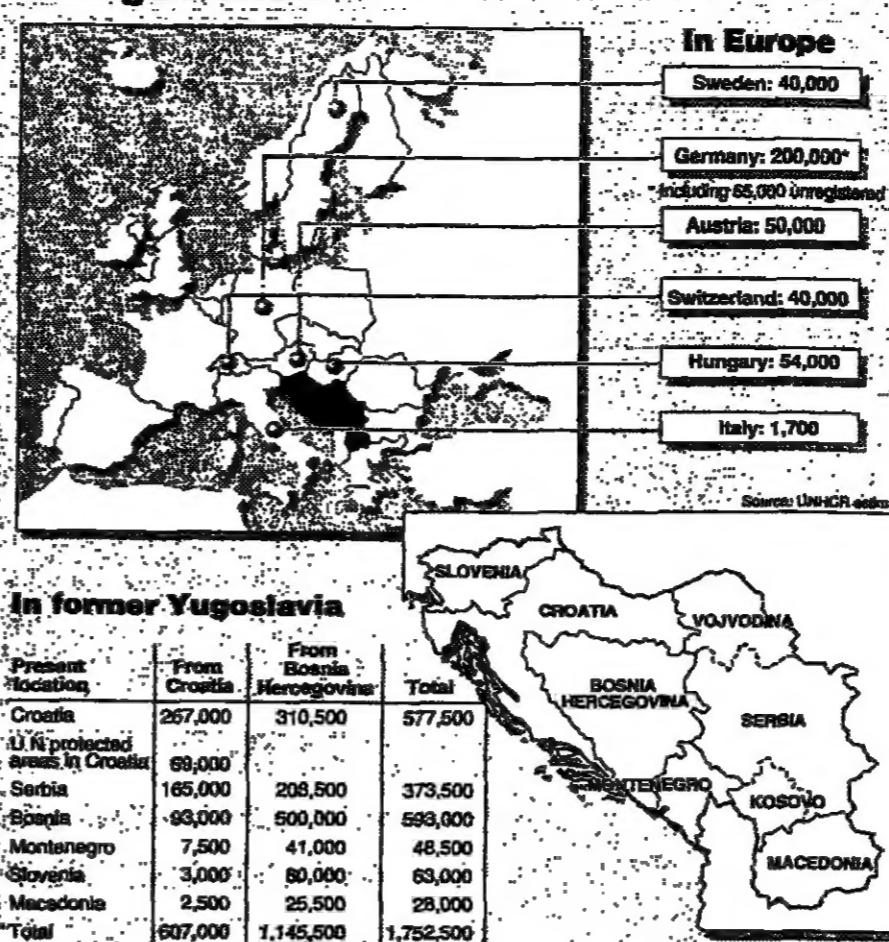
In Belgrade, Mr Laurens Jolles, of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said: "We are very concerned about the situation. I think you could have thousands of refugees in emotional situations piling up at the borders."

The Croatian decision, announced on Monday night, has placed particular strain on neighbouring Hungary, the last country in the region still offering sanctuary to Bosnian refugees.

Laid low by recession, Hungary may soon have to introduce its own entry restrictions, although officials in Budapest say it will be difficult to turn away refugees from Sarajevo.

"As long as we can bear it, we will. But it is not feasible for

## Refugee crisis



Hungary to remain alone," said Mr Janos Zubek, the Hungarian border guards' spokesman.

In Austria, which introduced visa controls for people from the rump Yugoslavia at the month, Chancellor Franz Vranitzky yesterday urged other European countries to take refugees.

Mr Ivan Jarnak, of the Croatian interior ministry, has placed particular strain on neighbouring Hungary, the last country in the region still offering sanctuary to Bosnian refugees.

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The Croatian government said the country was on the verge of collapse after admitting nearly 500,000 refugees.

There was speculation yesterday that Croatia was direct-

ing Bosnians towards Slovenia and Italy in an effort to influence international opinion.

A European diplomat in Belgrade said: "Croatia made the move to call world attention to the crisis. There is also a tremendous problem in Serbia which will only increase with the UN sanctions."

About 2.1m people have been uprooted from their homes over the past year of fighting in Bosnia and Croatia. A spokesman for the Austrian Chancellor said yesterday: "It is a great problem. Things will get worse rather than better."

Austria and Hungary are each giving shelter to about 50,000 refugees from the fighting. Austria has introduced visa controls for refugees from Serbia and Montenegro.

But is allowing in without visas Bosnians from areas suffering from Serbian forces.

Mr Peter Kessler, the UNHCR spokesman in Sarajevo, said: "We regret the decision but at the same time there was literally a flood of people."

He added: "There is still a lot of troop activity throughout Bosnia. People do not feel secure. Those who choose to stay behind find themselves facing persecution."

Serb forces, which control more than half of Bosnian territory, are driving out Moslems from eastern Bosnia in a policy of "ethnic cleansing".

UNHCR officials say neighbouring countries, not only Croatia and Serbia, must share the burden of accommodating the thousands of refugees.

Some 850 lorries will transport 17,000 tonnes of food following a European Community grant of Ecu65m (\$1.24m). But Mr Kessler said the UNHCR needs \$43m just to keep operations going in the former Yugoslavia through October.

Since the start of July, about 2,000 Bosnians have arrived in Hungary taking the total number of refugees from the conflict to about 50,000.

Many of the recent arrivals said they were forced out of their homes by Serb militiamen, given fresh Yugoslav passports and put on trains to be dumped in Hungary.

The Hungarian authorities fear a new wave of refugees as the Serbian transit camp on the deportation route in Vojvodina is reportedly full. An estimated 40,000 refugees from various parts of former Yugoslavia so far this year. Three-quarters of them 30,000 are ethnic Albanians from the province of Kosovo but over the past month half the inflow are refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

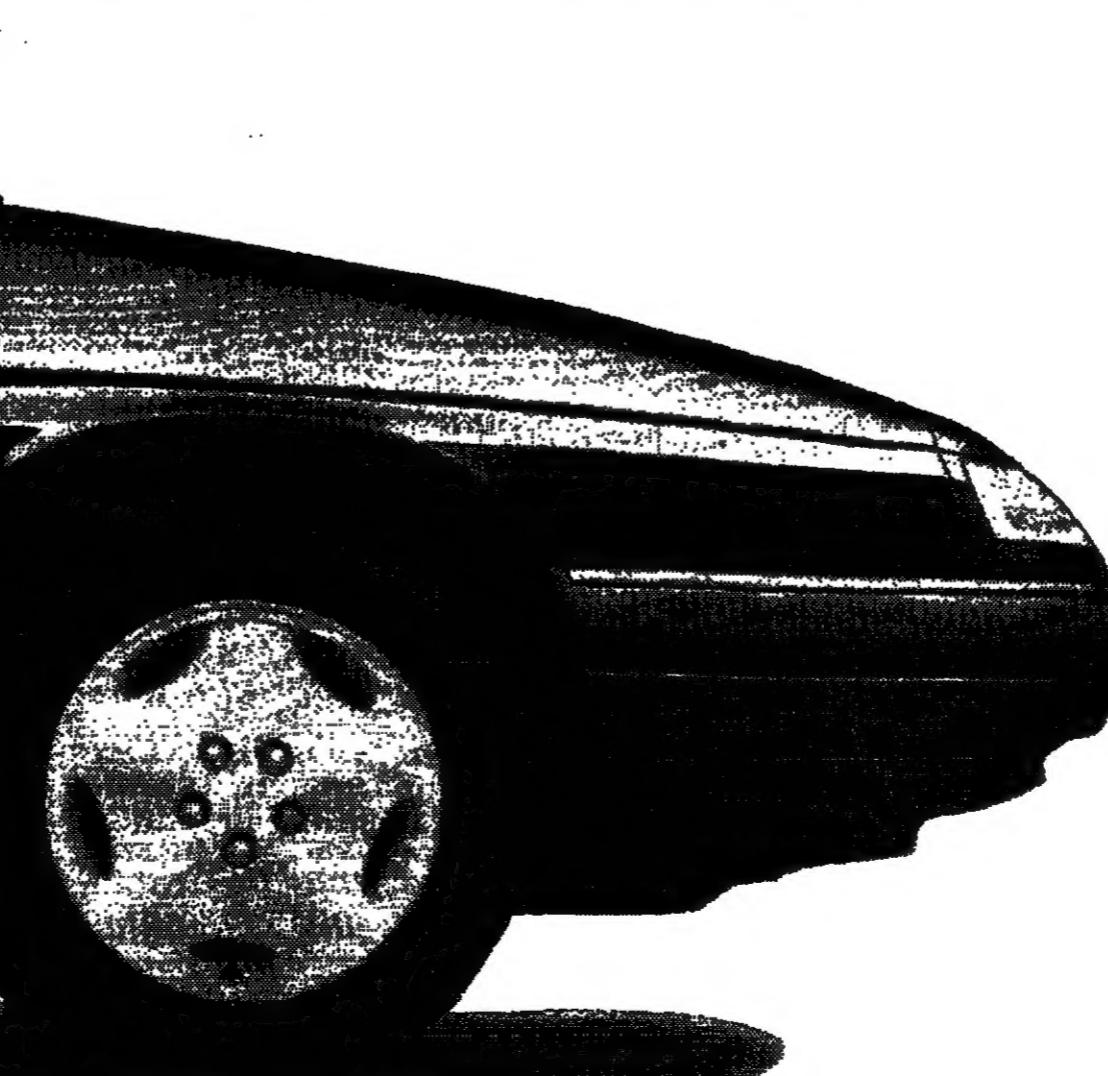
The German government plans to send three surveillance aircraft in addition to the destroyer, Bayern, earlier ordered to join the United Nations sanctions patrols in the Adriatic Sea.

After confirmation of the decision, expected at today's cabinet meeting, the three aircraft are expected to fly to temporary bases in southern Italy on Thursday.

The "intervention" has aroused strong protests in Germany. Opposition politicians threatened action in the constitutional court. According to Mr Karsten Voigt, the Social Democrat foreign policy spokesman, the move to help oversee the UN embargo on Serbia and Montenegro was illegal because it was not a humanitarian action, and therefore overstepped the limits on German troop deployment set down in the constitution.

Reporting by Nicholas Denton in Hungary, David Marsh in London, Laura Silber in Belgrade, Robert Taylor in Stockholm, Frances Williams in Geneva and agencies

## THE CITROËN XM ESTATE. IT SPEAKS VOLUMES.



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## NEWS: EUROPE

## Tax tonic for stock market in Turkey

By John Murray Brown  
in Ankara

TURKEY has introduced tax reforms to give a boost to the country's struggling stock exchange, and in turn increase revenue at a time of severe budget constraints.

The reforms, from January 1993, are intended to revive market activity, giving encouragement to investors and to companies considering equity flotation.

There will be tax exemptions for mutual funds which are invested up to 25 per cent in the stock market. Income earned from the management of mutual funds is also to be tax exempt, together with income on venture capital funds and income on real estate funds. To continue to enjoy tax exemption on sales of securities, a company will have to hold the assets for at least two years. Income generated from sales of rights issues at a premium will also be tax exempt.

In a bid to raise revenues the new law sets a minimum 23 per cent corporation tax rate, compared with a basic rate of 46 per cent. Effective corporate tax is around 10 per cent as companies are entitled to a series of tax incentives which they use to reduce their tax liability.

Hitherto, the government's appetite for funds has provided banks and corporations with low risk high yielding assets, but also served to put upward pressure on interest rates, damaging the investment climate.

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## IMF standby accord with Russia heading for failure

By John Lloyd in Moscow

THE International Monetary Fund is likely to fail to conclude a standby agreement with Russia because of a continuing lack of monetary control by Moscow, international economists said yesterday.

The economists, mostly American, in Moscow this week for talks with ministers, were told yesterday the budget deficit amounted to 20 per cent of gross national product - roughly the same deficit as that of the Soviet government last year before the collapse of the Union.

At the same time, private forecasts by government officials point to its inability to reduce significantly the deficit by the year end - despite a pledge to the IMF that the deficit, net of all foreign assistance

or loans, will be brought down to 5 per cent by December. This commitment, together with a promise to bring down inflation to 9-10 per cent a month, was a condition of the granting of a first tranche of \$1bn from the total proposed loan of \$24bn (\$12.5bn).

Economic policy makers in the west are discussing how western financial aid can be continued without an IMF "seal of approval" on Russian economic reform.

There remains strong political pressure in the west, though not in Japan, to help Russia financially. But until now, the official position has been that the IMF must take the lead.

Mr John Williamson of the Institute of International Economics in Washington said that, given the figures on the

deficit, "the chances of the rest of the IMF loan going through are very slight. In fact I would think it was wrong of the IMF to lend money in face of what is now happening".

Prof Richard Cooper of Harvard University said: "I think after hearing these figures it must be unlikely that you get an agreement now."

But Mr Konstantin Kagalovsky, the senior government official in charge of negotiations with the IMF, said: "I would agree it would be unlikely if these figures continued to be so bad. However, we have a good, tough budget and I think we can stick to it and get the figures we agreed with the IMF."

Mr Kagalovsky said the major problem was that of defining the "rouble zone" of former Soviet republics which

will continue to use the ruble, against those which decide to introduce their own currency. Mr Kagalovsky said: "We would be happy to see any country stay in the ruble zone, but if they do they must follow the policy, produced in Moscow, by the (Russian) Central Bank".

In recent months, other republics, especially Ukraine, have created large amounts of new ruble credits for enterprises. Under present arrangements, the Russian central bank must honour such credits. Discussions on defining and disciplining the ruble zone are now under way between the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, but there is no agreement on the rules for the zone, or a final list of which republics will join it.

## Moscow deputies seek press curbs

By John Lloyd

THE Russian parliament has joined battle with the country's media, in what seems to be an attempt to curb its still fragile freedom and reimpose central controls.

The parliament's praesidium voted on Monday to establish a council to oversee the state media - a definition which could include both TV and radio and almost all newspapers.

The new Observatory Council, to be composed of parliamentary deputies and representatives of political parties, would have the right to give "recommendations" which

would be mandatory on the media. A full-scale parliamentary debate on the Praesidium's motion is due to take place this week, before the Russian parliament goes into its summer recess.

At the same time, the Praesidium has proposed taking over the newspaper *Izvestia*, the most prestigious of the central newspapers with a claimed circulation of 3.8m throughout the former Soviet Union. It

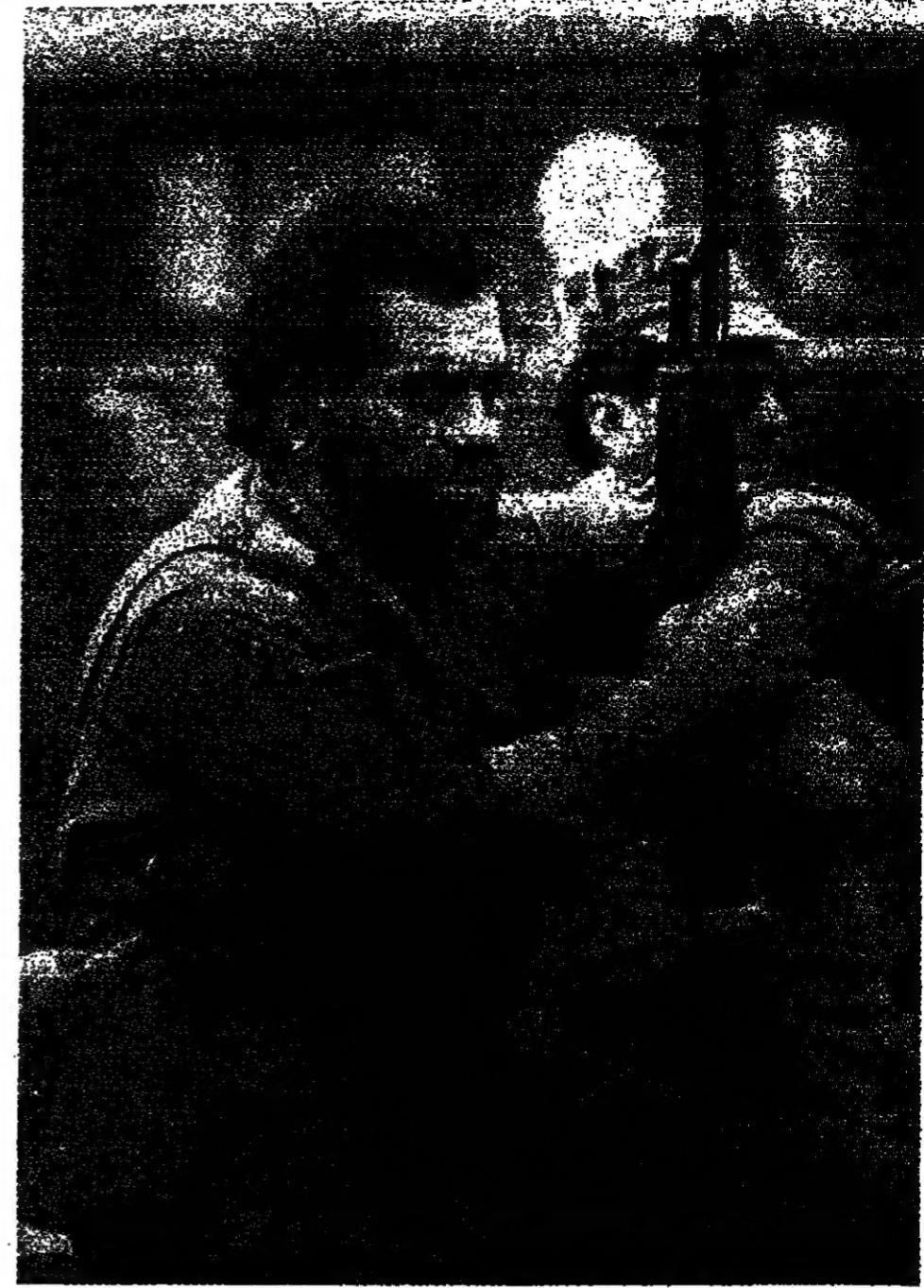
says that, as successor to the Union Supreme Soviet, the Russian parliament is the legal owner of the printing plant and publisher of the paper. Mr Otto Latsis, the paper's main commentator, yesterday furiously attacked the Praesidium's move as "an attack on democracy and the preparation of a new putsch".

Leyla Boultut adds from Moscow: Russia is simplifying restrictions on the movement of foreigners.

The government said it had ended the ban on travel to closed areas, although there remained some places which could be visited only with for-

ign ministry permission. This was because they contained security installations and the state had not yet worked out a system for sealing off individual plants and military bases.

The new list of restricted areas replaces one drawn up in 1990 which is out of date because of decrees by President Boris Yeltsin opening up whole cities. Now that the city of Chelyabinsk has been opened up, for example, just two territories outside the city will be "regulated". The list covers areas in 16 regions of Russia, such as the town of Komsomolsk na Amure in the Khabarovsk region, and islands in the Gulf of Finland.



An observer from the peace-keeping force keeps watch along the peace line yesterday

## Peace-keeping troops sent into South Ossetia

RUSSIA and Georgia yesterday deployed "blue helmet" troops to stop ethnic fighting in the disputed region of South Ossetia in the first peace-keeping operation since the collapse of the Soviet Union, *Reuter* reports from Moscow.

Reports from the remote Transcaucasian region said hundreds of heavily armed Russian troops from the 104th paratroop battalion moved into a 7km-wide security zone separating rebel South Ossetia

from the rest of Georgia. The mission was the first peace-keeping attempt anywhere in the former Soviet Union, whose disintegration last year has prompted waves of bloodletting in ethnic flashpoints from the Romanian to the North Ossetian leaders.

The peace-keepers' mission is to form a physical barrier between the two sides, opening the way to future talks.

The greatest threat is expected to come from hundreds of armed fighters on both sides, operating independently in a dozen or so bands outside the control of either Russian or Georgian authorities.

Interfax news agency said Russia's Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi, at present on a visit to Moldova, proposed a similar peace-keeping operation there.

But his talks with Russian-speaking separatist leaders in the breakaway Dagestan region appeared to run into difficulties.

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## ADVERTISEMENT

## TOUR DE FORCE!

Ricoh, a world leader in office automation, is lending massive technical support to the world's most famous cycle race. But this is just one part of the company's far-sighted approach to sponsorship and support, allied with its determination to provide a platform for the very best in youthful sporting prowess



All out for glory — and Ricoh's sponsorship helped to oil the wheels of success

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Official Olympic

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**Lighting the flame of excellence.**

On Saturday July 25 the last torch-bearer to carry the Olympic torch on its 5,000 kilometre journey from Greece, birthplace of the Olympic Games, to Barcelona, host to the 1992 Summer Olympics, will enter the packed Montjuic Olympic Stadium. In the historic gesture which has become familiar over the years, the runner will light the flame to signal the start of the XXV Olympiad.

It will be a moment of excitement, not only for the thousands of athletes gathered in Spain's historic port city but for the multitude who have laboured behind the scenes over the last two to three years to ensure that the Games are a success.

As the Official Facsimile Sponsor, Ricoh has not only installed the first facsimile network in history. By responding to the challenge of doing so, Ricoh opened up new areas to its technology.

Mr Hidesato Okashita, General Manager of the Ricoh Olympic Project Group, who had overall responsibility for the programme in over 160 countries, calculates that as many as 30 users saw a fax machine for the first time when Ricoh set up their fax facilities.

With just days to go before the official opening, Ricoh has attended to every tiny detail to provide the right machine for all users. The range of fax machines which Ricoh is providing for CCOB, the Barcelona Olympic Organising Committee, include the Ricoh Fax 80 and the Fax 85 as well as plain paper facsimile machines. Ricoh fax will also be available at the Telefonica telephone and fax booths situated in strategic areas at the Games venues in Barcelona and the surrounding towns.

Besides showing its support for the Olympics, Ricoh's involvement is a further reminder of its commitment to Spain, where Ricoh Espana SA, which began operations in 1986, is a growing force in the Spanish office automation market. From its Barcelona headquarters, Ricoh Espana SA has played a key role in providing technical support and service for Olympic Fax Network.

**A**S THE 79th Tour de France, the supreme sporting event for the world's cycling fraternity, reaches its half way stage today the struggle between the leaders is being eagerly watched on television by hundreds of millions of enthusiasts worldwide.

Only when the leaders battle along Paris's historic boulevards from La Defense to the Champs-Elysees a week on Sunday will the final outcome be known and the winner acclaimed in what is now the third ranking sports event in the world.

By then the cyclists of the 22 competing teams who finish the 1992 Tour de France will have covered 3,830 kilometres and travelled through more individual European countries than ever before.

And for the sixth consecutive year the cyclists bear the name of Ricoh, a world leader in office automation, on their back numbers.

As the official back-number sponsor of the 79th Tour de

Ricoh's strengths in copying machines reflect the company's position as the biggest-selling manufacturer of black and white copiers in the intensely demanding Japanese market and its role in creating the digital copier market and developing the company's *Imago* series, which remains the market leader.

And Ricoh's participation in every Tour de France since 1987 is further evidence of the company's continuing sponsorship tradition in the field of sports. This tradition reaches a climax this year when the 1992 Olympic Games open in Barcelona later this month. For as one of the 12 Top Sponsors of the XXV Olympiad Ricoh has installed the world's first Olympic Facsimile Network. (See box for details).

Ricoh is no stranger to the Olympics, having supported press centres in Montreal and Lake Placid in 1976 and 1980. But this time is of a different magnitude. For the first time a facsimile network links the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Lausanne, Switzerland with the Olympic Family around the globe. This involves all 165 National Olympic Committees, 89 IOC members and 33 International (sports) Federations.

The network was very much the brainchild of His Excellency Jaun Antonio Samaranch, the President of the International Olympic Committee, who has had a long-held dream of establishing an effective international information network among IOC member organisations.

Today, Ricoh has made President Samaranch's dream a reality.

The efficiency of this unique fax network was first put to the test during the Winter

Olympics in Albertville, France, earlier this year — and it passed with flying colours.

As the athletes from all around the world now gather in Barcelona for the Summer Olympics, Ricoh is confident that, thanks to its fax network, Olympic communications will be faster, more accurate and smoother than ever before.

Ricoh's worldwide commitment to sport sponsorship is shown by the diversity of the company's contribution to a wide range of sporting activities.

Skiing, tennis and rugby have all gained from the financial and technological support of Ricoh, which today is a global giant employing 47,000 people worldwide.

Last November, for example, Ricoh played a part in contributing to the success of the Rugby World Cup Tournament. Apart from providing a substantial cash contribution, Ricoh supplied and serviced all copying and facsimile machines being used at all the media centres at each of the 19 venues throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland and France, where the tournament was held.

Nor is Ricoh's support for sport always on a worldwide scale. The company has strongly backed Australian rugby, for example, while Ricoh UK Products, with a factory based in Telford in England's West Midlands, played its part in the development of the Telford Athletic Track.

Why has Ricoh devoted so much time, money, expertise and enthusiasm to sport sponsorship?

There are a number of reasons.

Take the Tour de France, for example. As the official

**Ricoh's new computer with a mind of its own**

A "thinking" machine which could learn how to process words and print out letters from dictation has come nearer to reality thanks to a dramatic new breakthrough by Ricoh.

The office automation giant has produced an experimental computer which does not need software to tell it how to carry out its work.

Ricoh's experimental neurocomputer — so named because it imitates human thought processes — is in its early stages. As yet it can only learn 16 characters at a time, despite containing the very latest microchips and drawing on computer power some four times faster than a supercomputer.

Yet Ricoh's neurocomputer points the way to bigger things. From it Ricoh hopes to incorporate a small neural computer in its office photocopier machines which will enable them to learn tasks by themselves — for example, determining whether a copy is produced with an even tone — rather than relying on software which sets the instructions for the machine.

The new computer will be adapted to many uses and will achieve the performance needed to control not only office equipment but also robots and machine tools. It can be adapted to recognise images, voices, objects and so on, all without the need for software programmes. For example, Ricoh has successfully developed a robot capable of moving forward without hitting walls. Thanks to ultrasonic sensors the robot can sense the position of the obstruction and programmed to change direction to prevent it colliding with solid objects.

The brains of the system are 32 of the new LSI RN-100 chips, which was the world's first neuro LSI chip with built-in learning capability.

Looking further ahead, a new neurocomputer currently being developed by Ricoh will use the next generation of neuro LSI chips: the RN-200, which contain 32 more components than the previous LSI RN-100 chip.

The principle of the neurocomputer is that it learns from its mistakes until it has mastered a particular task. For example, Ricoh's experimental computer was recently put through its paces by being fed equations governing a ball rolling on a seesaw, and instructed to prevent the ball from dropping off the end. After several attempts the computer worked out how to keep the ball balanced in the middle.

Although neurocomputers are not new, existing models combine the traditional central processing unit with software. Ricoh's computer dispenses with the central processor and uses 16 neurons operating in parallel and linked together.

The biggest drawback at the moment is the enormous amount of computing power the computer uses, but Ricoh researchers are working on this.

According to Dr Morio Onoe, General Manager of Ricoh's Research and Development Centre and Professor Emeritus at Tokyo University, the first practical application for the computer will be in mechanical control.

Ricoh's ability to operate at the sharp end of technological evolution reflects the large investment which the company spends on R & D and the wide range of research as well as the R & D Development Centre.

back-number sponsor, Ricoh is able to remind its European public, customers and potential customers that the group is now a growing force in the European office automation markets.

Established in Europe since 1963, Ricoh co-ordinates its European operations from its headquarters, Ricoh Europe BV in Amstelveen, Holland.

In France, for example, at one stage the Tour de France cyclists will pass close to Ricoh Industrie France SA's modern manufacturing facility at Colmar, Alsace. From the first plant built in 1987 and its

on the progress it has made in Europe so far.

So far as the Olympic Games are concerned, Ricoh has many motives in supporting the Olympic Movement. The group's dedication to improving international technological communications is certainly one of them.

As Mr Ryuji Anraku, Chairman of the Ricoh Olympic Project Group has put it: "Ricoh pioneered international facsimile messages with the first one-minute trans-Pacific transmission in 1973. Since then it has been our mission to spread facsimile communications worldwide."

**B**ut Ricoh's commitment is more than technological, although bringing more than 160 countries together through swift communication gives Ricoh an unrivalled opportunity to display its expertise as a world leader in office automation on a global stage.

As Mr Yoshiharu Moriya, chairman of Ricoh Europe sees it, the Olympic Games, like the Tour de France or the Rugby World Cup, provides a platform for youth and sporting skills and the encouragement of world peace.

Great sporting events such as the Olympic Games provide a forum where many of the problems of a troubled world can, for a time at least, take second place to triumphs and tribulations as the best of the world's athletic youth seek their moment of glory.

By helping to bring the world closer together through technological communications, Ricoh hopes it can also help the world's people understand one another a little better . . .

# RICOH

## NEWS: AMERICA

# At the Democratic convention, Jurek Martin finds Bush-bashing to the fore

## Delegates talk over food for thought



THE FIRST night of an American political convention is the overture to the work of the week, and the Democrats certainly sang it in harmony on Monday. But not everybody belted it out with the same raucous vigour.

Take the lead tenor from New Jersey. There was a time when Bill Bradley could hold an audience in Madison Square Garden in the palm of his hand on any given evening.

That stopped 15 years ago. "Bradley back in the Garden" – to quote the buttons on every New Jersey delegate in sight – was not wearing basketball sneakers and a number 24 shirt, but the dark suit and tie of professional politician increasingly regarded as the Democratic party's thoughtful conscience and, albeit less widely, as its best presidential candidate – not this year but before too long.

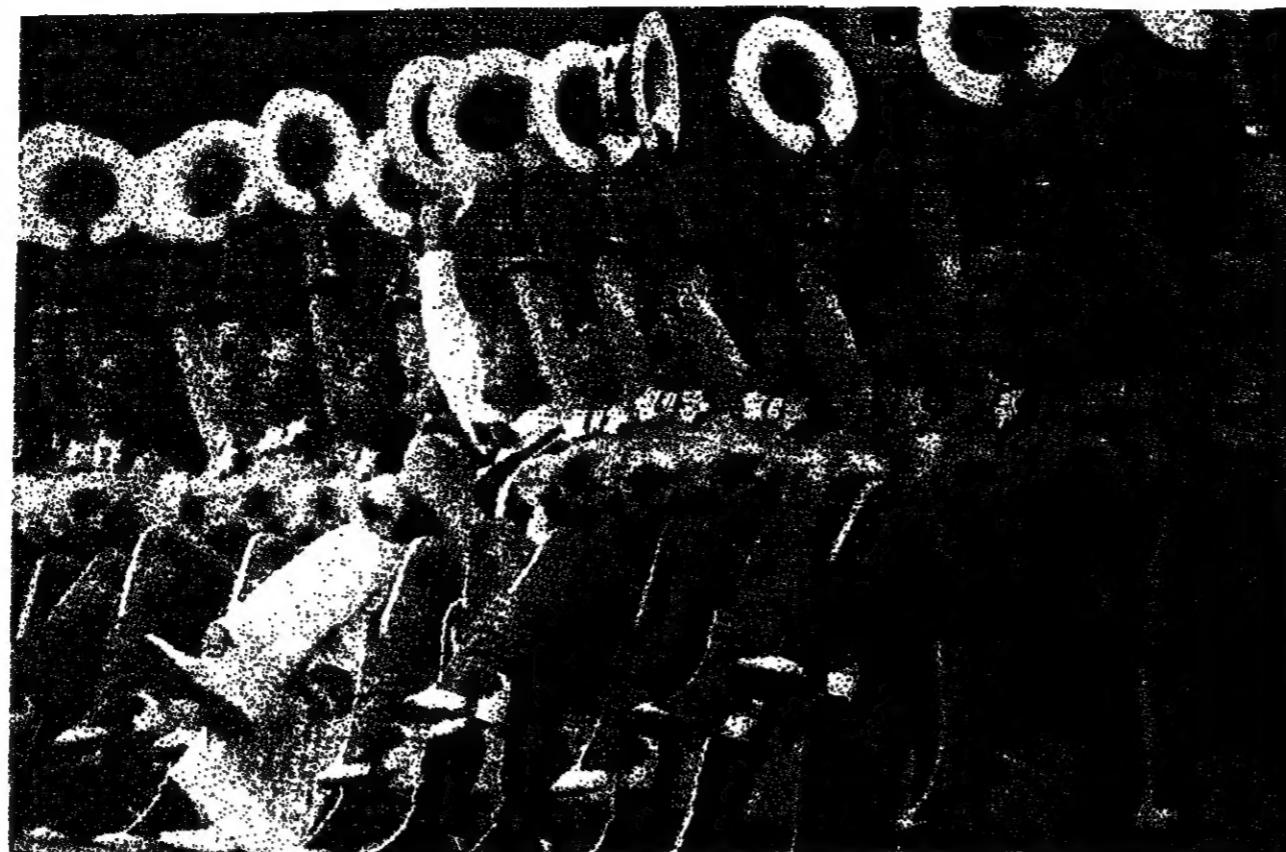
Senator Bradley's keynote address on Monday night showed him at his least, and most, impressive. On the down side, one conclusion is safe.

Rumour has it that he has spent almost as many hours practising his public speaking as he did his jump shot. If so, it was to much less effect.

The Garden did not hang on every word, not in comparison to his fellow-keynote speakers. Governor Zell Miller of Georgia, for example, had them rocking in the aisles with his full-frontal assault on the Republican opposition.

Yet even he paled into insignificance when the final act, Barbara Jordan, black and now confined to a wheelchair with multiple sclerosis, delivered a soaring, cadenced civics lecture, in its way as memorable as the address she gave in the same arena to the 1976 convention when a congresswoman from Texas.

As a formal speaker, Mr Bradley still lacks the necessary attributes of timing and delivery. He swallows his good



HATS OFF, IT'S PARTY TIME: A Broadway show's chorus took the stage at the opening of the Democratic convention

lines and talks on when his audience is applauding.

There are other considerations. First, one speech does not necessarily a political summer or winter make. Mr Mario Cuomo gave a great one to the 1984 convention and is still only governor of New York; Governor Bill Clinton delivered a terrible one to the 1988 convention and is about to be the Democratic presidential nominee.

Second, there was, as ever, substance to the Bradley speech. The theme – facing up to collective responsibility rather than indulging in "individual thrills" – is not new for him, but he is developing it all the time. It is one that is not easily reduced to slogans.

"What we face is a crisis of

meaning," he said in one of his plainer passages. "Without meaning there can be no hope; without hope there can be no struggle, and without struggle there can be no personal betterment. Individualism degenerates into greed without agreement on its limits. The microchip may be faster than the human brain but it isn't connected to a heart. A new drug might defeat a disease but it won't eradicate hatred."

Or, again on a more hopeful note: "It is sometimes said Americans lack a sense of tragic life. It would be more correct to say that Americans are not content to let tragedy have the last word. The United States is history's greatest experiment in the elimination of despair."

This is the sort of reflective philosophy that political con-

ventions are not accustomed to hear. Add to them Barbara Jordan's reflections – the need for equality of sacrifice, including social entitlement programmes, the impermissibility of racism, be it black or white, and the imperative of valuing reason over emotion in assessing character – and it cannot be said that the Democrats were sent home to bed with nothing to think about.

The vague sense of dislocation is that this was not the intended dual theme of the first night. One part of this was to be a lot of Bush-bashing, to which Mr Bradley powerfully contributed. Perot-purpling, however, was much less in the score, though there was some of it from Governor Miller. The Democrats have worked out that the Bush-Perot conflict helps them.

**E** motions were wound up not, as in days of yore, by the haunting and socially-conscious songs of Woody Guthrie (This Land is Your Land) and by gospel choirs, but by a succession of marching and big bands straight out of high school and Las Vegas floor shows. This was designed as a celebration of America, marred only by the fact that a whole line of white tubas was clearly embalmed with the name of their Japanese manufacturer.

Dissent was also dismissed with Republican efficiency. When 600 odd delegates began chanting "let Jerry speak" on behalf of the former governor of California, the other Brown, Ron, the party chairman, moved briskly to other business. It will require an act of some magnanimity for the Californian to be permitted to address the convention. Mr Nelson Mandela, who is to speak tonight, was much easier to fit in at short notice.

Hardly a word was heard from the podium that might embarrass the party nominee, Barbara Boxer, running for the Senate from California, got in a dig at the free trade agreement with Mexico, which Mr Clinton basically supports, and Mr David Dinkins, New York mayor, went further than Mr Clinton in demanding that US cities be rebuilt before those in

the campaign.

The party lost the northern border state of Chihuahua, but did so to the conservative National Action Party (PAN).

This should both strengthen the government's democratic image and the faction in the PAN which is conciliatory towards the PRI.

The government tried to turn the campaign into a contest between their pro-business candidate, Mr Eduardo Villaseca, and the PRD, in which it succeeded in more ways than one. While he travelled in a borrowed helicopter, or one of

# PRI snatches victory from its own defeat

\$275m in Solidarity money this year, three times the national average per head. Solidarity's emblem of the national colours is almost indistinguishable from that of the ruling party.

The campaign was one of the most expensive and sophisticated undertaken by the government party, which set up a huge organisation of paid and voluntary cadres, culminating in 72,000 vote-promoters, each of whom was expected to deliver 10 votes on election day. Good performers were promised free holidays.

The government tried to turn the campaign into a contest between their pro-business candidate, Mr Eduardo Villaseca, and the PRD, in which it succeeded in more ways than one. While he travelled in a borrowed helicopter, or one of

Damian Fraser looks at Mexican democracy after a PAN triumph

three aeroplanes, the PRD made do with three minibuses, and some Volkswagen Beetles. Almost without exception, the media in the state supported Mr Villaseca, giving little coverage to the PRD.

The government's plan, said Miguel Angel Granados Chaves, a political commentator in La Jornada newspaper, has been to "present Cardenas as an unavoidable option for the 1994 presidential election by showing him incapable of leading his party to victory in his own state."

This appears to have been accomplished. Also, the weekend results should further widen the gulf between PAN and the PRD, an important government objective over the past three years.

The electoral authorities report the PRI with 50.9 per cent of the vote in Michoacan, against 34 per cent for the PRD, with 76 per cent of the votes counted.

In Chihuahua, the PAN has

51 per cent, against 42 per cent for the PRI, with 56 per cent counted. Mr Francisco Barrio Terrazas has claimed the government for the centre-right PAN, after alleging he was robbed of the job after a 1986 election. Cheering Barrio supporters took to the streets after the weekend election.

Even so, the way in which the PRD defeated the PRD in Michoacan casts doubt on the government's commitment to a fairer, more open political system. Frederico Reyes Berde, editor of the respected political magazine *Este País*, put it thus: "The controlled media, illegitimate resources, indiscriminate support, legislation and agencies – all under the thumb of the executive and its officials – turn the electoral contest into a fiction."

The PRD claims that the government party filled the electoral rolls, outspent it 100:1 and, through its control of the state's electoral machinery, inflated its vote. Mr Ricardo Paez, PRD spokesman, described the electoral process as "fraught with irregularities." The PRD will claim victory, and post-electoral tension is expected.

The government's fear that the opposition might unite in the 1994 presidential elections on an pro-democracy crusade has receded. Instead, the opposition is likely to be divided, with the PAN celebrating its victory and the PRD, mulling over the now mandatory post-electoral protest.

The PRD will have to ponder its future. It has failed to win in its stronghold, where Mr Cardenas won 54 per cent of the vote in 1988. If the party's protests against electoral irregularities turn violent, the government will portray it as a disruptive, dangerous force imminent to change, further damaging its chances of recovering before 1994.

# Hillary in battle Clinton plays to women's gallery for cookie vote

By Jurek Martin in New York

By George Graham in New York

THIS MAY be the year of the woman candidate in US politics, but not much has changed for male candidates' wives.

The Democratic party has sought to use its convention in New York to showcase its impressive roster of female candidates for this autumn's elections, capitalising on the spreading belief that the white, male homogeneity of US political institutions desperately needs a change.

A surge of interest in the issues of sexual harassment and abortion has increased the focus on women candidates.

Sexual harassment moved to the top of the political agenda during last year's challenge by Professor Anita Hill to the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas; it has been kept there by the continuing investigation into assaults on women officers at a Navy pilots' convention.

Nos has attention on abortion faded after the Supreme Court's mixed decision on the issue late last month.

On Monday Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, one of only two women with the 98 men in the Senate, introduced some of her party's strongest contenders for Senate elections in November: candidates such as Ms Lynn Yeakel in Pennsylvania, Ms Barbara Boxer and Ms Diane Feinstein in California, and Ms Carol Moseley Braun in Illinois.

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By Alan Friedman  
in New York

DO DEMOCRATS have more fun? If they don't, it's not for want of trying.

On Monday afternoon, just as the party's convention was being gavelled to order at Madison Square Garden, more than 500 of the 5,000 delegates seemed far more interested in making merry.

It has not escaped some women delegates' notice that there is a certain incongruity between efforts to break one mould by bringing women candidates to the fore, while at the same time pushing Mrs Clinton back into another.

She was accused of alienating traditional homemakers earlier this year with a barbed remark about staying home and baking. Now, however, she is fighting for the cookie vote in a bake-off against Mrs Barbara Bush, arranged by Good Housekeeping magazine.

Mrs Clinton claims her recipe is more "democratic" because it uses vegetable shortening rather than butter, and is appealing to convention delegates, through teeth that some observers describe as "barely clenched", to back her in the contest.

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The music played, the sweltering July sun bore down on the crowd, the din became a roar and Brooklyn's borough

president extolled the virtues of cheesecake, Coney Island hot dogs and the Democratic party.

The party faithful, however, were busy with their vigorous pursuit of the fun side of "Fun City".

The 45-year-old Senator Breaux, nearly sidestepping oil

"There's fun. There's a whole lotta fun. And then there's Louisiana fun. We closed down the Tatou Club early this morning and we're still at it."

industry lobbyists and besotted delegates in Hawaiian shirts, addressed himself to the issue at hand.

"You have to understand that we have raised fun to a new standard this week. There's fun. There's a whole lotta fun. And then there's Louisiana fun. We closed down the Tatou Club early this morning and we're still at it."

The ever-salacious New York Post newspaper was mean-spirited spot on as its three-inch headlines screamed PARTY TIME! and proceeded to tell the story of how go-go dancers

taxi rides from socially conscious "minority" festivities in Harlem to funky gatherings in Greenwich Village, from select soirees on the Upper East Side to dives on the Lower East Side.

The Tatou, a midtown night club where Mr Clinton recently played his saxophone, was everybody's favourite. Less popular was the black-tie Texas All-Star Gala on Sunday night at the trendy Supper Club in the theatre district. "The highlight of that event," said one weary congressional staffer from Oklahoma, "was getting out of there."

offset by falling prices for clothing and other goods.

The Labour Department said the increase in prices at the retail level compared with a 0.1 per cent gain in May. Last month's rise reflected a jump in the cost of energy, partly

while the rank and file guzzled beer, the well-heeled and well-connected slipped champagne at the A-list events. Chief among these was party stalwart Pamela Harriman's Waldorf Astoria function in honour of Bob Strauss, the Democratic power broker turned Bush administration ambassador to Moscow.

Equally coveted was an invitation to the \$1,000-a-ticket gathering at Mayor David Dinkins' digs, starring newlyweds Senator Edward Kennedy and Victoria Reggie, just in from Byzantium.

Sandwiched between the élite and the street were the numerous cocktail parties for state delegations.

Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico was the featured attraction at one such party, in Greenwich Village's Minetta Tavern.

Mr Tom Udall, New Mexico's attorney-general, explained why he was attending so many parties this week: "The reason is to keep my wife from shopping all the time." At this point the attorney-general's wife took your correspondent aside and whispered her bottom line: "I'm going shopping anyway."

consumers remain cautious about making large purchases.

A sustained pick-up in consumer spending is considered vital for a broad recovery in the US economy as purchases of goods and services fuel about two-thirds of economic activity.

*Jurek Martin*

Francisco Barrio Terrazas is congratulated by supporters after claiming victory in Chihuahua state

# US consumer prices increase moderately in June

US consumer prices rose a moderate 0.3 per cent in June, the government said yesterday, providing new evidence that the sluggish economy is keeping inflation in check. Reuter reports from Washington.

The government also said retail sales rose 0.5 per cent

last month, almost entirely because of a surge in new-car sales.

The Labour Department said the increase in sales followed a revised gain of 0.4 per cent in May. The Commerce Department said, but excluding cars, sales barely rose 0.1 per cent in June after a 0.2 per cent gain in May, suggesting

## Bush, Salinas seek Nafta accord

By Nancy Dunne in Washington and Damian Fraser in Mexico City

PRESIDENT George Bush and Carlos Salinas de Gortari were to meet yesterday with their trade ministers in San Diego, California, to iron out the most troublesome bilateral issues in the negotiations for a North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta).

But in a major concession, Mexico has agreed to open up its oil sector to "performance contracts," according to a report in *El Financiero* news paper.

Under a "performance contract," an independent oil driller is paid an additional premium if he strikes oil. At present Mexico only countenances "service contracts" where the driller is paid a flat fee irrespective of the oil he finds.

Mr George Baker of the University of California described the change in Mexico's position as the most significant event in the history of Mexican oil for 50 years.

This concession is a compromise between the US insistence that oil be opened up on a risk basis - where the successful driller assumes ownership of part of the oil he finds - and Mexico's view that such an opening would violate its

nationalist constitution.

Many oil companies prefer to operate on a risk, or failing that performance, basis, which gives them greater control over their operations.

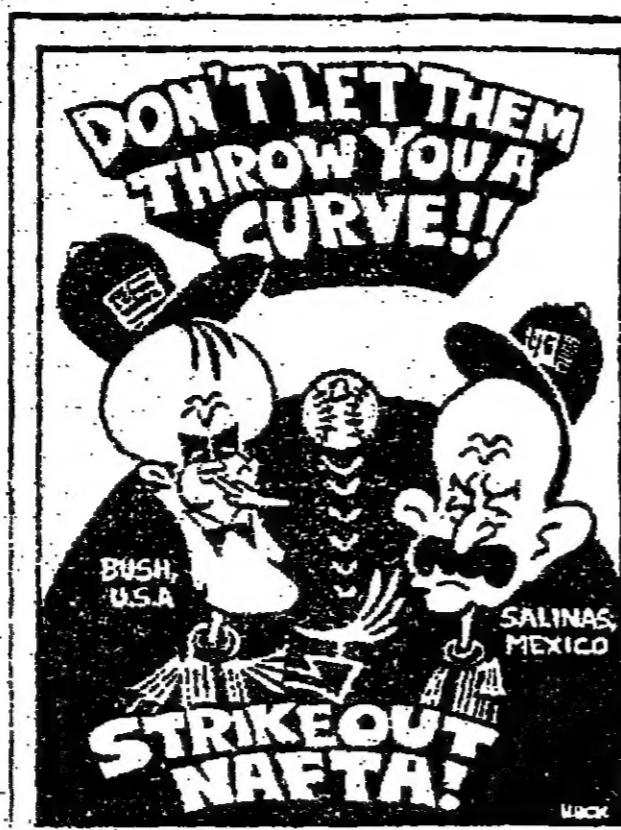
Also likely on the agenda for the two presidents is a recent controversial US Supreme Court ruling, which upheld the kidnapping of a Mexican doctor, Dr Humberto Alvarez Machain, who is now awaiting trial in Los Angeles for his alleged role in the torture of a US drug enforcement agent.

The chief trade negotiators of the US, Canada and Mexico - the intended members of Nafta - last week held a marathon series of meetings which ran into Saturday, but progress was slow. Mr John Weeks, Canada's chief negotiator, said on Friday he was "a bit disappointed."

Differences over government procurement, energy, market access, agriculture and rules of origin have plagued the talks.

Congress must be given at least 90 calendar days' notice of the President's intention to enter into a trade agreement. The leaders could then have a high-profile signing of the accord before Mr Bush must face the voters on November 3.

Following their meeting, the two presidents are due to attend the All-Star baseball game. There they will be



Baseball buddies: 50,000 anti-Nafta cards will be sent out today

immortalised on the cover of 50,000 baseball cards, distributed by anti-Nafta groups.

The two presidents are

shown wearing baseball uniforms with the slogan: "Don't let them throw you a curve ball, strike out Nafta."

Scots seek Taiwanese investment

A SCOTTISH Office minister is to visit Taiwan in September to try to persuade Taiwanese companies to bring inward investment projects to Scotland, writes James Burton.

Mr Alan Stewart, Scottish industry minister, will be the first minister from a UK territorial ministry to visit Taiwan.

Mr Stewart's visit is being described as a private visit in response to a Taiwanese invitation.

This procedure is used to avoid offending China and because the UK has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

No Taiwanese investments have yet been established in Scotland.

In November 1990, Delta Electronics, a manufacturer of power supply equipment for electronic products, announced it was set up a plant at Inchinnan near Glasgow which could eventually employ 570 people. However, the project was subsequently frozen and is thought unlikely to be revived.

Mr Stewart, who is spending five days in Taiwan, said he did not expect his visit would lead to immediate announcements of new projects.

they had reached agreement on giving US brewers easier access to the Canadian market.

At the meeting yesterday of Gatt's governing council, Washington accused Canada of deliberately trying to circumvent the panel's findings.

The US is particularly angry about two practices by the province of Ontario - a beer pricing system by the monolithic state liquor board, which includes a handling charge for imported beer, and a tax rise on non-refillable containers for alcoholic drinks.

Earlier, the Gatt council approved a six-month extension, till end-June 1993, of Mr Arthur Dunkel's term of office as director-general.

## Passenger aircraft industry in tailspin

Daniel Green examines a rapid decline in values

A WORLD glut of passenger aircraft is sending aircraft prices into a tailspin and threatening the expansion plans of aircraft makers, airlines and aircraft leasing companies.

Evidence for a slide in aircraft values is mounting. Earlier this year, a one-year-old Boeing 737 was for sale at an asking price of about \$27m.

The price seemed reasonable, considering it cost \$30m when new. It sold for less than \$23m. That seller was desperate; most would rather put their property into storage.

There are about 800 civil aircraft parked on desert runways in the southwestern US, safe from corrosion. They represent about 10 per cent of the western world's passenger jet fleet, and at new prices, comprise about \$23bn (£13bn) of non-performing assets.

This makes bad reading for investors. The industry increasingly depends on the financial sector to provide capital to buy aircraft. Failure of last month's equity flotation by GPA Group, the world's largest aircraft leasing company, was partly due to the soft market for used aircraft.

GPA makes more from selling aircraft it has owned for a few years than from leasing them.

Investors did not have to rely on anecdotal evidence. Apart from storing aircraft, airlines have been trying to lease them. The result has been a decline in lease rates.

The monthly payments for leasing a Boeing 737, the world's biggest-selling passenger aircraft, are up to 22 per cent less than a year ago, according to Avmark, an Anglo-US aviation consultancy.

The effect is widespread: 67 of the 89 passenger aircraft types have seen lease rates fall during the last year by up to 47 per cent.

The fall has steadied in recent weeks, according to the Los Angeles-based International Lease Financing, the second biggest aircraft lessor after GPA. "It could just be the summer season," says Mr John Plueger, a senior vice-president



at the company.

If manufacturers have been under pressure to cut the price of new aircraft in response to oversupply in the secondhand market, they are not showing it.

They have resisted price cuts on new aircraft, arguing that the apparently unstoppable growth of air traffic determines pricing policies.

That growth ended last year, the first for decades to show a decline in passenger numbers.

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## Trade explosion propels Mercosur towards reality

By John Barham in Buenos Aires

POLITICAL and economic instability in Brazil may yet scuttle attempts to form a common market in South America, or at least delay the January 1 1995 deadline for implanting a single market to be known as Mercosur between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

None the less, an explosion in trade, cross-border business links, falling trade barriers and continuous advance in dull, vital, regulatory harmonisation are giving integration a dynamic of its own. Companies ranging from multinationals to small local com-

panies are assuming sooner or later Mercosur will become a reality. This perception is in turn accelerating integration.

Mr Jorge Bussmann, director of Merchant Bankers Asociados, a Buenos Aires investment bank, says: "The impact of Mercosur here will be dramatic. [Brazil] may postpone matters, but people are taking Mercosur into account."

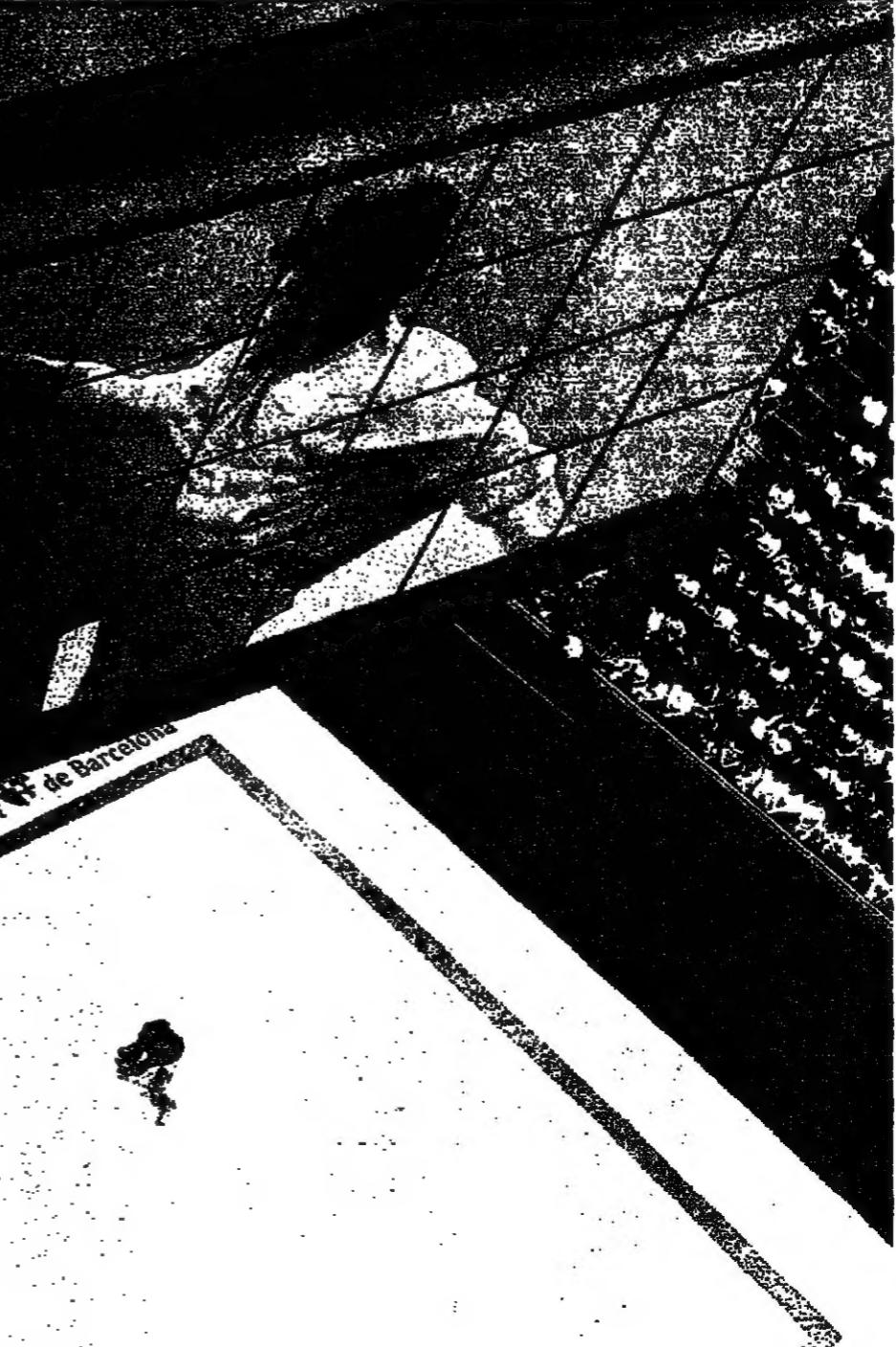
The car industry began integrating operations in Brazil and Argentina in 1985. It is unlikely that Argentina's car industry could have survived without access to Brazil's market. All big car and component industries in the two countries are now integrating operations and sharing capacity.

## US foments beer war with Canada

By Frances Williams in Geneva

THE BEER war between the US and Canada was intensified yesterday when Washington demanded authorisation from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade to retaliate against its northern neighbour for discriminating against imports of US beer. The US said it was seeking to recoup damage to US brewers of about \$80m a year.

A US complaint against discriminatory practices by the Canadian state liquor boards in Canada was upheld by a Gatt dispute panel last September. In April, following earlier US threats of retaliation, the two sides said



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## NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

## Beijing hardliner backs reforms

ONE OF China's most hardline communist ideologues, Li Ximing, has made a public statement strongly in favour of reform, Reuter reports from Beijing.

Li, who is party chief for Beijing, was quoted in an article which carried his name in yesterday's Beijing Daily that economic change should be speeded up along capitalist lines and that left-wing thinking should be resisted. His statement echoes instructions issued recently by Deng Xiaoping, the country's senior leader.

Western diplomats and Chinese observers have long viewed Li as an unashamed Maoist and there had been suggestions in the capital that he would soon be removed. He is a member of the Politburo and is seen as a close associate of Li Peng, the prime minister.

His article, a lengthy report summarising a meeting of Beijing's Communist party standing committee, is a signal that left-wingers fear Deng's campaign is unstoppable.

Deng has said that those who do not support reform must step aside. One by one, ideologues within the party have given support to Deng's policies. Li is by far the most strident hardliner so far to step into line.

Diplomats say Deng's opponents have been weakened by the deaths over the past few months of several leading communist traditionalists. They say the opponents fear for their positions during a period of intense back-room dealing at Communist party headquarters in the run-up to the crucial 14th party congress later this year.

Separately, China's labour minister, Ruan Chongwu, warned that unemployment will rise as the nation carries out economic reforms. According to the New China News Agency, Ruan said China's employment policy, which ensures cradle-to-grave job security, should be overhauled.

Ruan gave no figure for the number of unemployed, but he said China's urban industries had a surplus labour force of over 10m, while the number of surplus rural workers stood at more than 100m.

"The central government must encourage the development of the labour market and competitive mechanisms to control labour and employment for all Chinese citizens," Ruan was quoted as saying.

The China Daily newspaper quoted him as saying that urban unemployment should be limited to 3.5 per cent, or about 5m people.

## French open Vietnam bank

FRANCE'S Banque Indosuez yesterday became the first foreign bank to open a branch in Vietnam, Reuter reports from Hanoi.

Banque Indosuez, one of five French banks with representative offices in Vietnam, opened in the nation's commercial hub, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). Representative offices have not been allowed in the past to carry out full banking business.

Thailand's Bangkok Bank was scheduled to open a branch today, local newspapers reported.

As part of an attempt to fuel foreign investment and help modernise the banking system, Vietnam has given branch approval to four other banks - Crédit Lyonnais, Banque Nationale de Paris, Banque Française du Commerce Extérieur, all French, and the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group.

## Name-dropper who haunts corporate Japan

The head of one of Tokyo's credit information agencies is enjoying the recession, writes Robert Thomson

THESE polite words of warning come courtesy of Mr Eiji Tamaki: "Please read this letter. If you do not answer, your name will be registered on a computer, and it will be difficult for you to get a loan, credit or a lease. If you have already paid, please forgive us."

Mr Tamaki's credit information and collection business, Consumer Credit Clearance, is prospering in inverse proportion to the woes of corporate Japan in these debt-burdened days.

Having built the company by studiously following the advice of a weathered 1959 US manual, Starting and Managing a Small Credit Base and Collection Service, the effervescent Mr Tamaki has discovered that his statement echoes instructions issued recently by Deng Xiaoping, the country's senior leader.

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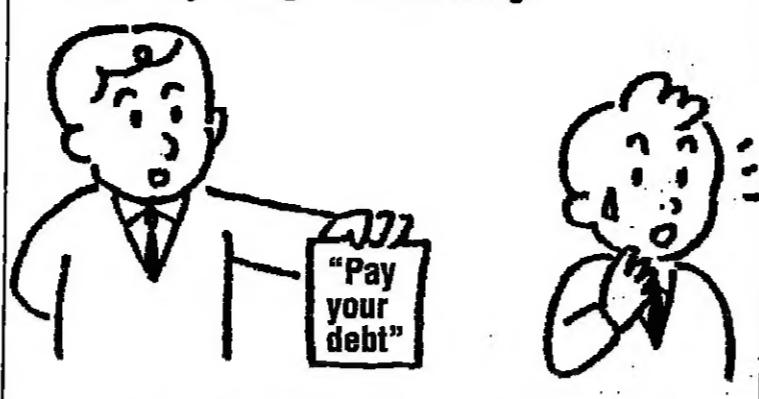
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"Haven't you forgotten something?"



Research in the late 1980s, Japanese banks, consumer credit companies, and department stores were more intent on finding new clients than on checking creditworthiness.

Those years of excess have returned to haunt financial institutions. Last year, personal bankruptcies rose to 23,237 from 11,273 a year earlier, and the liabilities of failed businesses jumped from Y1.986bn (23.85bn) to Y8.149bn. Banks are under extreme pressure to accept delayed payments from troubled companies, whose property and securities collateral has evaporated as magically as it

appeared. These are fertile fields for debt collection, but the mainstream industry's growth has been restricted by a general awareness that debt collecting in Japan is done by the *yakuza*, or gangsters, whose methods are less polite than Mr Tamaki's.

A spate of loan-sharking and strong-arm collecting by gangsters a decade ago prompted the government to introduce the Consumer Lending Act, which outlined acceptable methods of collection and redefined the boundaries for Mr Tamaki's credit operations. "People can see my hands.

I have all my fingers," said Mr Tamaki, referring to the missing little finger that often identifies gang members. Not long after its founding in 1969, CCC received threats from gangsters, which saw Mr Tamaki moving in on their territory, and he still occasionally gets a call from a gangster type. "We just give our address and make clear to them that our office is directly opposite Kojimachi police station."

The legislation a decade ago limited collection for profit to lawyers, but Mr Tamaki has got round that restriction by establishing a separate "voluntary membership union" which takes fees of 30-40 per cent of money recovered for its 5,000 members.

But Mr Tamaki's real achievement is building a data base that gives the company leverage over the debtors of his client companies. There are four other credit information companies, but by specialising in bad debts, CCC

is able to warn a delinquent consumer that he or she will soon be given a spot on Japan's largest credit black-list. Having watched debts mount and companies crumble, Mr Tamaki is amazed at the laxity of corporate Japan. "Companies have just jumbled all their uncollectable loans together and reported them as loan assets. They know there are serious problems, but no one wants to take responsibility for them." A reason

more companies are turning to CCC, he said, is that "bubble era" executives have retired or resigned and the new management is less reluctant to highlight the sins of the past. One of those sins has been to provide too much credit to consumers poorly educated in its dangers.

The non-profit Japan Credit Counselling Association assists consumers who are tangled in credit.

Small investors and shoppers have been left exposed by the ebbing tide of the Japanese economy, as overtime payments have fallen, and collateral (such as stock holdings and golf club memberships) has collapsed.

Calls to the association rose from 2,929 in 1990 to 5,243 in the fiscal year to the end of March. In the first quarter this year, there were 1,887 inquiries, with the average caller a young man or woman between 20 and 29 years owing a total of Y5m (220,900) to 11 separate companies.

None of this is news to Mr Tamaki, who explained that the loan-sharking of a decade ago generally claimed working-class victims, but the credit boom of the late 1980s has left debts spread across society.

"We really are making money," Mr Tamaki explained. "But it is a bit difficult to find young people who want to work in debt collection. People still think it's only the business of the gangsters."

## Botha set to offer new policy package

By Michael Holman and Philip Gavith in Johannesburg

MR PIK BOTHA, the South African foreign minister, is expected to set out a package of measures designed to curb political violence and break the stalemate in constitutional talks when he addresses an emergency session of the United Nations security council tonight.

Botha will be among leading South African politicians, including Mr Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress (ANC) president, and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, head of the Inkatha Freedom party, to address the session, which opens today.

At the same time, Mr Botha is expected to elaborate on President F W de Klerk's recent suggestion that international observers might have a role to play in efforts to curb the violence, which led to last month's ANC withdrawal from constitutional talks.

The government is not expected to oppose Mr Mandela's call for a UN representative to make a fact-finding visit to South Africa. But it is likely to resist the ANC leader's suggestion that such a visit should be followed by despatch of a UN mission to monitor violence, drawing a distinction between a small group of observers and a large UN force playing a more active role.

Both sides have stressed the significance of the UN occasion, but from very different perspectives.

Government officials pointed out that what was once inconceivable has been made possible overnight leaders of homelands and black minority parties have been given a platform at the UN.

Their presence will be used to underline Pretoria's argument that a post-apartheid constitution must reflect the concerns and interests of black as well as white voters concerned about minority rights.

For its part, the ANC sees today's proceedings as an important step towards direct international involvement in the South African crisis, something the world community has rejected until now.

Meanwhile, efforts to avert serious industrial disruption continued as the South African South African Co-ordinating Committee on Labour (Saccos), a body which represents South Africa's big employers, distanced itself from reports claiming it had lent its weight to key ANC demands, including the need for early moves towards an interim government and elections for a constitution-making body.

Their presence will be used to keep direct authority over the Jewish settlements, security, foreign relations and all frontiers. Palestinian negotiators are especially concerned about their ability to win popular support for an interim agreement which will inevitably limit the scope of Palestinian self-rule.

While all Palestinians were agreed in rejecting Mr Shamir's offer, dangerous splits are already in evidence over how to deal with Mr Rabin.

See editorial comment

## Arabs suspicious of Rabin's approach

Israel's enemies have quickly lost their post-election optimism, writes Hugh Carnegy

WHEN Mr Yitzhak Rabin won Israel's general election last month, Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman Yasser Arafat said exultantly: "The Israeli public has voted against war and the terrorism of Shamir."

By last Saturday, however, Mr Arafat had changed his tune, saying he did not see Mr Rabin as different from Yitzhak Shamir, the former Prime Minister.

Other statements by Arab leaders - notably from Syria - have sounded a similar note of scepticism over whether Mr Rabin, leader of the Labour party, will offer anything more of substance to the Arabs than did Mr Shamir and his hardline Likud party government, despite his offers to exchange peace missions and to accelerate the Middle East peace talks. But there is no doubt that Mr Rabin has a very different approach to peace making than Mr Shamir. It is almost certainly because they recognise the challenges this will present to them that Palestinian and other Arab leaders have begun to back off from their initial optimism about his election.

Above all, Mr Rabin is a pragmatist who has never shared Mr Shamir's ideological commitment to perpetual Israeli control of Eretz Israel - the biblical land of Israel that includes the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. In his final speech as prime minister on Monday, Mr Shamir bitterly attacked Mr Rabin on this very issue.

Although he avoided saying so during the election campaign, Mr Rabin also recognises that Israel cannot afford to defy the immense changes in the world of the past several



Yitzhak Rabin on the attack in the Knesset late Monday

years - notably the disappearance of the Soviet Union and its influence in the Arab world.

"It is our duty to see the world as it is now, to discern its dangers, explore its prospects and do everything possible so that the State of Israel will fit into this world whose face is changing.

"No longer are we necessarily 'a people that dwells alone', and no longer is it true that

"the whole world is against us". Mr Rabin said in a pointed rejoinder to the siege mentality of Mr Shamir.

Unlike Mr Shamir, Mr Rabin believes Israel must trade occupied land in exchange for peace and is ready to curb Jewish settlements there.

He insists on keeping Jerusalem and other so-far unspecified areas deems vital for Israel's security, which he will

continue to settle. Labour party policy does not yet accept an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. These are big problems for the Arabs. But the acceptance in principle of the "land for peace" formula provides a far sounder basis for progress in negotiations than did Mr Shamir's adamant rejection of it.

Under the terms of the Madrid peace talks, however, the final status of the occupied territories is not yet the subject of negotiation. First, there is to be a five-year interim period of Palestinian self-government as a transitional phase.

Here, again, Mr Rabin is offering the Palestinians significantly more than Mr Shamir. He is proposing to base the interim arrangements on those outlined in the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt of 1978. Mr Shamir said he was not willing to go as far as the Camp David proposals, offering instead only "municipal autonomy" - in practice not much more than the right to collect rubbish.

Mr Rabin is offering the Palestinians elections to a self-governing authority that will take over everyday administration in the West Bank and Gaza from the Israeli military and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from main population centres.

Paradoxically, Mr Rabin's more forthcoming approach has unsettled the Arabs. Firstly, having benefited from the shift that affected US-Israeli relations under Mr Shamir, Arab leaders are now afraid of a revived US-Israel front that will put them under great pressure to make concessions. The US, after all, brokered Camp David. For their part, the Palestinians, who

until last year rejected the Camp David formula outright, are already objecting to Mr Rabin's general outline (detailed proposals will not be made until peace talks resume in Rome, probably in early September).

They oppose his intention to keep direct authority over the Jewish settlements, security, foreign relations and all frontiers. Palestinian negotiators are especially concerned about their ability to win popular support for an interim agreement which will inevitably limit the scope of Palestinian self-rule.

While all Palestinians were agreed in rejecting Mr Shamir's offer, dangerous splits are already in evidence over how to deal with Mr Rabin.

See editorial comment

## United Nations World Investment Report

### Transnationals pace the growth track

By Edward Salls

MULTINATIONAL companies, far from being the gloved hand of first world imperialism, are an important source of economic growth for developing countries, at least those countries lucky enough to share in their largesse.

This is the message of the second World Investment Report, published today by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development. Entitled "Transnational Corporations as Engines of Growth", the UN study concludes that foreign direct investment by transnational companies is fast overtaking international trade as the driving force behind the globalisation of the world economy.

Global foreign direct investment flows rose rapidly during the second half of the 1980s, growing four times faster than domestic output and 2% times as fast as exports. The total stock of foreign direct investment world wide now stands at \$1.7 trillion (million million) with annual flows in 1990 amounting to \$225bn.

The bulk of this investment originated in developed countries, which also attract more than four fifths of total outflows, with the EC, US and Japan together accounting for 70% of world inflows.

Developing countries have been losing out in the race to attract this growing source of new investment. While the vol-

ume of total FDI to developing countries continued to increase in the 1980s, its share in the total fell.

The distribution of FDI across developing countries has remained highly uneven, with Portugal receiving the largest share of FDI in 1990, 50 per cent down on the previous year, and were only slightly more than

that received by Portugal.

The UN report identifies a number of ways in which direct investment by multinationals may speed economic development in developing countries:

• Capital formation: while FDI constitutes only a small share of total domestic invest-

ment it often constitutes a larger share of investment in key growth industries such as consumer durables and high technology manufacturing.

• Technology transfer: the share of high or medium research-intensive industries has increased as a proportion of total sales in the last decade;

• Trade: US manufacturing affiliates in developing countries exported 33 per cent of their output in 1989, up from 22 per cent in 1982.

These growth benefits tend to accrue to middle and high income developing countries. The growth requirements of low income countries - higher agricultural productivity, basic infrastructure and increased educational and nutritional standards - are marginal activities of transnational corporations.

As a result, the UN fears that many developing countries may become increasingly marginalised because of their non-inclusion in the global strategies of transnational corporations.

To counter this risk the UN report calls for the establishment of a multilateral foreign direct investment facility as a tripartite venture between host, home and transnational corporations to alleviate imbalances in FDI flows.

World Investment Report 1992, UN Publications, RM 28.85, United Nations, New York NY10017. Price \$45.

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## NEWS: UK

# Fall in output fuels doubts over recovery

By Peter Norman,  
Economics Correspondent

A DROP in production of cars and chemicals and material for the building industry caused a surprise fall in UK manufacturing output in May, adding to doubts over the prospects for economic recovery.

Contrary to City expectations of unchanged production, the Central Statistical Office yesterday reported that manufacturing output declined by 0.6 per cent in May compared with April.

Output of the energy and water industries fell by 2.2 per cent in the month, as a result in a 0.9 per cent drop in overall industrial production.

The seasonally-adjusted data for May provide further evidence that Mr John Major's election victory failed to boost economic activity. Figures for the latest three months, which the government considers a better guide to recent trends,

inflation as measured by prices of manufactured goods at the factory gate failed to show a decline last month, disappointing hopes of further easing in cost pressures.

The Central Statistical Office said the prices of products leaving factories rose by 3.6 per cent in the year to June, the same as in May. This measure is often taken as an indicator of underlying or "core" inflation.

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inflation as measured by prices of manufactured goods at the factory gate failed to show a decline last month, disappointing hopes of further easing in cost pressures.

The Central Statistical Office said the prices of products leaving factories rose by 3.6 per cent in the year to June, the same as in May. This measure is often taken as an indicator of underlying or "core" inflation.

Output of the energy and water industries fell by 2.2 per cent in the month, as a result in a 0.9 per cent drop in overall industrial production.

The seasonally-adjusted data for May provide further evidence that Mr John Major's election victory failed to boost economic activity. Figures for the latest three months, which the government considers a better guide to recent trends,

## UK to urge end to coal and steel levy

By Alison Smith

THE UK government is to use its presidency of the European Community to target the levy on EC coal and steel for early abolition.

Mr Michael Heseltine, trade and industry secretary, will press for agreement to phase out the levy sooner than 2002 when it is scheduled to end.

The department of trade and industry has come under pressure from both British Steel and British Coal to see the end of the tax which amounts to about 0.3 per cent of the value of what is produced. The levy dates from the treaty of Paris in 1952, which set up the European Coal and Steel Community — forerunner of the European Community itself.

Some £500m has accumulated in the fund, which is used to finance tasks such as research and development, re-training and job replacement.

## Mr Smith fails to fill the house

By David Goodhart,  
Labour Editor

IN THE US the Democrats can still elect a leader in a packed hall full of people who look pleased, even excited, about what they are doing.

The opposition Party will this Saturday elect Mr John Smith as leader of Britain's main opposition party in a half-empty hall full of people wondering what they are doing there. Quite a few rather important people will not even bother to attend.

Right-wing unions are also irritated by the unnecessary cost of the day. Mr Paul Gallagher, leader of the electricians section of the AEEU, says the voting could have been done by post. "It will prove an extremely expensive ballot box and the money could have been better used for other things," says Mr Jordan.

Scottish sword-play, Page 14

The unions, which account for 40 per cent of the electoral college, will be heavily outnumbered by the 650 delegates from the constituency parties, which have 30 per cent of the vote and the 270 Labour MPs, who also have 30 per cent, and who have to attend in person for their votes to count.

For a party that has been accused of relying too much on glitz and trade unions a sharp reduction in both might be counted a blessing.

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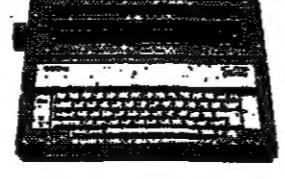
Scottish sword-play, Page 14

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## Britain in brief



### ITV's choice for top job turns it down

ITV must restart its search for a network chief executive because the candidate who was offered the job changed his mind and turned it down.

The offer of the most important job in commercial television, managing a £250m a year budget was made to a director of a publishing company three weeks ago. The job is worth more than £250,000 a year including pension.

Food output was unchanged while drink and tobacco production rose by 1.5 per cent.

Chemicals, a strong performer last year, saw a 0.5 per cent drop in output between the two three-month periods. Despite a fall in production in May, car output between March and May was 7.4 per cent higher than between December and February.

Food output was unchanged while drink and tobacco production rose by 1.5 per cent.

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Golden age: the Silver Link locomotive leaving King's Cross in 1935, when competition from motor vehicles was increasing

Watered-down plan sees stations for sale and passenger franchises

## Step-by-step sell-off plan for BR

By Richard Tomkins,  
Transport Correspondent

THE government yesterday published its long-delayed policy document (white paper) on the future of British Rail paving the way for a step-by-step privatisation starting as early as next summer.

Mr John MacGregor, transport secretary, said the proposals first put forward by the transport secretary and containing little detail about how the privatisation goals are to be achieved.

The biggest immediate change is unlikely to be perceived by passengers. BR will be split into two, with one part in charge of much of the passenger railway to the end of the decade and beyond.

Mr MacGregor said it was impossible to predict when privatisation would be complete.

but confirmed that it would not be within the five-year lifetime of the present parliament.

The white paper was originally due to appear in December last year, but became bogged down in embarrassing ministerial differences about the best way to proceed.

The end-result is a watered-down version of the proposals first put forward by the transport secretary and containing little detail about how the privatisation goals are to be achieved.

However, the 21-page document set out only the basic framework of a process which seems set to leave BR in charge of much of the passenger railway to the end of the decade and beyond.

The government will then attempt to privatise the train services. But only the freight

services will be sold outright: the passenger services will be contracted out under franchise.

The white paper gives few details about how or when the franchises will be offered. Mr MacGregor said there would be 30 to 40 of them, and that franchising would be carried out "flexibly and progressively."

Legislation paving the way for the changes will be introduced in November. If Royal Assent is obtained the following summer, the first freight services could be privatised almost immediately, but the first passenger services are unlikely to be franchised before spring 1994.

The white paper also provides for the private sector to get involved in running stations. Some might be rented to franchisees, it says, and the

government may also be prepared to consider other selling or leasing arrangements.

Would-be train operators reacted with interest to the proposals, though most will want to see how much BR proposes to charge for the use of its tracks before making pursue the idea.

The white paper was also welcomed by Tory MPs, though some qualified their enthusiasm with reservations about the time the benefits would take to show through.

But Mr John Prescott, Labour's spokesman, predicted a contraction in rail services, saying the white paper was "ripe for exploitation by property speculators, route operators bribed by public subsidies, and inevitably by the Tories' City friends."

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## MANAGEMENT

"WE USED to enjoy taking people over our factories, but not so much now," says William Ho, finance director of Video Technologies (Vtech), a Hong Kong-based manufacturer of computers, telecommunications and educational toys. "They are so empty."

Ho looks along a line of women assembling and testing "mother boards" for the company's latest desktop computer and says: "We'll be moving this all to China in the near future. We will then use the space for conference rooms and places for customers to meet our salesmen."

At another company, Steven Lam, managing director of Truly Electronics, a toys, calculators and much else besides manufacturer, is in full flight, extolling the industry of his fellow Chiu Chow compatriots. "Working 10 hours in a day is nothing for a Chiu Chow person; 16, 17, 18 hours a day is more normal and no holidays," he says.

In 1984, Lam set up a factory in Shantou, a town on the south coast of the Chiu Chow-speaking region of Guangdong which borders Fujian province. His family comes from the town and his 72-year-old father, Tam Tak Ming, has resorted there to oversee a burgeoning family business which today employs 3,500 people.

A quiet business revolution is underway in southern China. In the continuing search for lower costs and higher productivity, a new division of labour is being created. Hong Kong's manufacturers are exporting their production facilities wholesale to Guangdong, the province of China which borders the colony.

Truly moved all its manufacturing capacity to Shantou in 1988. Currently Vtech makes 90 per cent of its toys and educational games in Dongguan, south-east of Guangzhou (Canton), 80 per cent of its telecommunications equipment and 30 per cent (soon to be 70 per cent) of its

computers there. These manufacturers, and thousands like them, are taking advantage of the cheap land and labour in southern China and the new-found willingness of the communist Chinese to permit capitalist enterprise in the mainland.

Truly recently acquired a 99-year lease on 2.3m square feet of land adjacent to its present factory in Shantou for \$1.2m (£620,000). "The land is virtually free of charge," says Joe Lok, Truly's finance director. He points out that in Hong Kong, Truly would spend more than that in rent in less than two years.

The cost of labour is also a fraction of Hong Kong levels. Vtech employs 6,500 workers at its factories in Guangdong. Many come from other provinces so it undertakes to house and feed all the people it

employs. In addition to wages, it also pays a per capita management fee to the Dongguan authorities. The total of all the costs comes to HK\$700 (247) a worker a month – just 23 per cent of the wage bill for a similar worker in Hong Kong.

But costs are not the only reason for locating in Guangdong. The local authorities do not interfere in the running of factories and are less stringent about health, safety and environmental limits to corporate growth.

Contractually, Vtech subcontracts the assembly of its products to the factory which is owned by Dongguan Foreign Investment Development Corporation," says Wong. "Practically, they don't have any people there; it's all run by us."

China is seen as a source of cheap

labour – which is it – but "cheap" also suggests lack of skill. Not so, say Vtech and Truly.

Vtech has hired 70 engineers who have recently graduated from some of China's top universities. For Alan Wong, Vtech's chairman and founder, "one of the biggest resources in China that is overlooked is the large pool of good engineers."

"Engineers are our biggest need. Product cycles are getting shorter and shorter and you need a lot of engineers to turn out new products and ideas. You can't do that in Europe and the US because engineers are so expensive."

Vtech pays its local engineers Yuan 300 (276) a month – three times what they would earn if employed by one of China's state

industries. Similarly, Truly's factory in Shantou is managed by local people; only the top engineers come from abroad. There are 14 Hong Kong engineers and six Swiss engineers advising on the manufacture of parts for watches which are then exported to Switzerland.

Truly owns Ernst Borel, a Swiss watch manufacturer, and it is marketing Swiss engineering to the low costs of southern China. The six Swiss engineers are in China to teach local engineers the finer points of watch making.

But doing business in China, even for the Chinese, is not always successful.

Vtech first dipped its toe in the water with a HK\$10m investment in Shenzhen, a special economic zone which runs the length of the Hong Kong-China border, but it failed.

"Our partner was a northerner who followed too many rules and red tape," says Ho, a southerner who was born and bred in Hong Kong.

"The first moment we talked to the Dongguan authorities we saw that they were open minded and very business-like. They impressed us from the very first meeting. They also came to us when the agreements were ready to be signed; our previous partner had asked us to go to him to sign."

Relationships, or *guanxi*, are key to doing business in Guangdong, and China more generally. Truly has gone as far as to have a dedicated team, consisting of seven executives – one of whom was a



senior communist party official – who do nothing other than make and cement relationships with government officials throughout China.

"When we want to develop a city, then we send the team there first. In the south if you send an official a television set, he will turn up his nose; in the north they are content with a radio."

and a change in lifestyle could bring it down.

Many executives are initially annoyed to find their blood pressure is up, and later relieved to discover that they were unwittingly placing themselves at risk by getting too fat or drinking too much. Recent studies have shown that lifestyle changes – weight reduction, salt restriction, and cutting down on alcohol – lower blood pressure and make medication more effective. If none of these apply, other measures to consider include stress management, exercise, giving up smoking, and getting professional advice on your diet.

The author is the medical director of the Insead Business Health course.

## Industrial power house in Guangdong

In less than a decade, Guangdong has changed from a mainly agricultural economy to an industrial power house to rival Shanghai as China's premier location for manufacturing. Hong Kong's transformation has been equally rapid. It has switched from a significant manufacturing-based economy to one which is daily becoming more service-based.

"What Hong Kong has is management, research and development, engineering and marketing. The major decisions

will continue to be taken here," says Alan Wong, chairman of Vtech.

Chinese figures show that Hong Kong dominates foreign investment in southern China. At the end of 1990, there were 22,500 enterprises in Guangdong in which Hong Kong and Macao businessmen had invested – relatively small-scale.

The federation reckons that more than 60 per cent of Hong Kong companies in the Pearl River region have invested less than HK\$10m, (\$670,000) and for many, the investment is as little as HK\$1m to HK\$5m.

– and employ directly, or indirectly, an estimated 3m workers. However, as a recent survey by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries underlines, the investment by Hong Kong companies in southern China is

relatively small-scale.

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## Keep a finger on the pulse to avoid hypertension

Dr Michael McGannon says beware the doctor or nurse who sends your heartbeat racing

During the contraction phase, the pressure generated by the heart is transmitted through the arteries to all organs. This pressure wave, measured by the first number, should be no more than 130. Above that level the pressure may be damaging the arteries, causing them to lose their elasticity and harden – rupture or blockage could result.

During the relaxation phase, the pumping chambers fill with blood for the next volley. The second number measures how well the heart is relaxing: a reading of more

than 80 could mean it is not working properly during this phase.

Although blood pressure tends to creep up with age, other things can also raise it. Overweight leads to high blood pressure, as fat is a vascular tissue through which the heart must pump much harder. Stress also contributes through the release of too much adrenaline, while heavy drinking and lack of exercise can make matters worse.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled with no side effects. The first step is proper diagnosis and evaluation; the second is treatment, through changes in both lifestyle and medication.

Do not decide that you have high blood pressure on the basis of one reading. "White-coat hypertension", in which the high blood pressure is actually caused by the doctor or nurse, is not uncommon.

For instance, you may be active, non-smoking, a light drinker, little, and handle stress well. But at your annual company check up, your

lifestyle is already blameless,

should you be on medication?

The answer is that any high blood pressure reading should be confirmed by at least two further readings, or better still by 24 hour monitoring. Make sure the measurement is taken after at least five minutes of rest, and that you have neither smoked nor drunk alcohol or coffee for at least two hours.

If your blood pressure is still high – an average of at least 140/90 – buy a well-calibrated blood pressure machine from the chemist and take your pressure at home

under less stressful conditions.

Once you have confirmed beyond

doubt that you really do have high blood pressure, ask yourself the following questions:

• Do you consume large amounts of salt, fat or alcohol?

• Have you put on a lot of weight in the last year?

• Have you been particularly stressed or sedentary recently?

• Is there diabetes in the family?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, there may be a good reason for the high reading.

## BUSINESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## Recycling group for electronics

To counter the vast amounts of scrap electronics equipment dumped in the UK's landfill sites, the computer and electronics industry is forming a recycling association to promote the reuse and recycling of electronic equipment.

The Industry Council for Electronic and Electrical Equipment Recycling (Icer) brings together electronics companies, retailers and waste disposal experts for the first time in the UK.

"Icer grew out of a report produced by the Centre for the Exploitation for Science and Technology on end-of-life electronics," said Graham Marson, chairman of the new group.

"The companies who have joined already have an interest in being environmentally sensitive and have established environmental policies and strategies. Our diverse interest and backgrounds led us to believe we should work together."

Electronic and computer manufacturers Hawlett-Packard, IBM, ICL, BT, together with retailers Thorn EMI Rentals and Boots have joined the group, which also includes Dow Chemicals and ICL. Waste disposal companies Mann, Mayer Cohen and the Erid Group represent the recycling industry.

According to Marson, Icer will be formally launched this autumn. Membership is open to companies involved in electronics in the widest sense. Boots became involved after considering how best to dispose of the hundreds of old televisions, radios, kettles and toasters returned to its shops which no longer work.

Cest predicts that 6m items of electronic equipment will be dumped into British landfill sites by 1995. The waste will include 120,000 photocopiers, 800,000 personal computers, 1.3m televisions and 2m microwave ovens.

Marson hopes Icer will develop an infrastructure that will make electronics recycling a commercial proposition. Icer will also lobby for what Marson calls "pragmatic legislation" to counter German recycling laws which require electronics companies to take back all their old electronic equipment by 1994.

Simon Vail

**G**eothermal energy sounds like a heaven-sent answer to two of south east Asia's most pressing problems – electricity shortages and air pollution from the burning of fossil fuels – but the experience of the Philippines demonstrates how even this apparently elegant solution is fraught with environmental obstacles.

Just as the region's shrimp exporters either deplete the sea's natural stocks or destroy coastal mangrove swamps to make way for shrimp farms, so the Philippines must choose between a range of environmentally unsatisfactory options to alleviate its desperate lack of electric power.

Coal-fired power stations in the Philippines have been criticised by nearby residents for polluting the atmosphere and the fields, and a proposed nuclear plant was suspended partly because of fears that it would be prone to earthquake damage.

A decision this year to approve the building of a geothermal plant inside a national park regarded as a holy place by local tribes has shown that geothermal energy also has environmental drawbacks.

Exploitation of the earth's subterranean heat holds obvious advantages for the Philippines, which is poor enough to need to reduce its oil imports and rich enough in volcanic activity to make investment in geothermally-produced electricity worthwhile.

The Philippines, with about 20 per cent of its electricity already coming from this source, is the second largest producer of geothermal power after the US. It intends to add 1,600 MW by 2000 to its existing capacity of 880MW. Indonesia also has substantial geothermal potential.

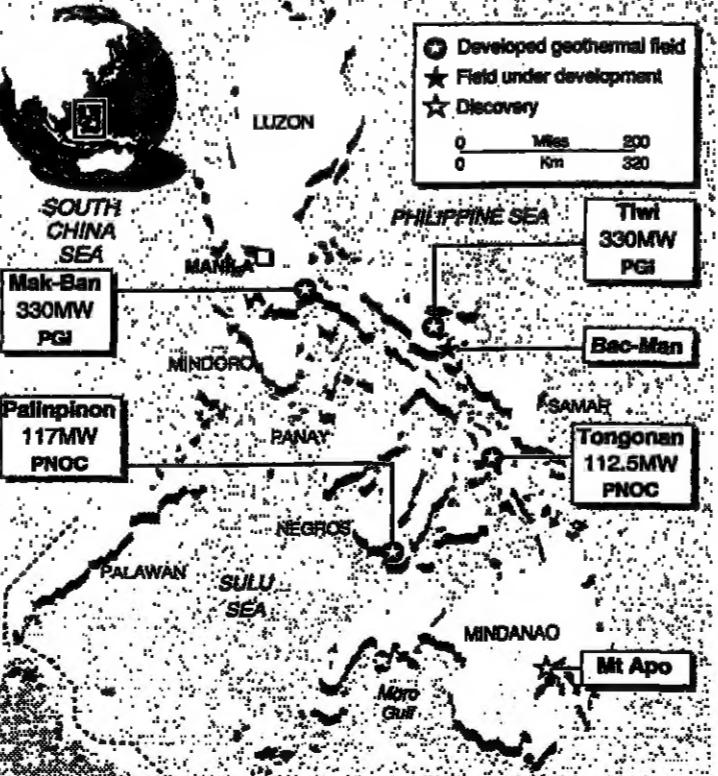
With power cuts up to 12 hours long on the main island of Luzon and on Mindanao in the south, there is no doubt the need for further generating capacity in the Philippines. The previous administration of Corazon Aquino abandoned a 620MW nuclear power station built by Westinghouse on the US under the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos before it was commissioned amid a controversy over safety and alleged corruption, but neglected to order new plants to make up for the electricity shortfall.

It was against this background that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), after years of delay, reluctantly issued an environmental clearance certificate in January for a 120MW geothermal project inside the Mt Apo national park on Mindanao. The decision angered environmentalists, who argue that it endangers the wildlife in the park, including the rare Philippine eagle,

The Philippines' investment in geothermal energy is not without its drawbacks, writes Victor Mallet

## Getting into hot water

## Geothermal fields in the Philippines



and negates the whole purpose of establishing such national reserves.

Geothermal energy, exploited by drilling wells similar to oil wells and drawing out hot subterranean water to run steam turbines, enjoys several environmental and other advantages over alternative sources of electricity. With no combustion required, the plants are more reliable and should release less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than oil or coal-fired power stations. Nor are they affected by the drought which has sharply reduced the output of the Philippines' hydroelectric dams.

They must, however, be built in places with proven geothermal resources – places which may be distant from electricity consumers or, like Mt Apo, environmentally controversial.

Nor are these the only problems. Like oil fields, geothermal fields eventually run out of commercially exploitable energy. Drilling is expensive, turbines are noisy and development of a geothermal field can release unpleasant-smelling hydrogen sulphide and substantial quantities of carbon dioxide.

Nazario Vasquez, vice president for energy of the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC), acknowledges that the first geothermal projects in the country in the 1970s failed to recognise the problems of water pollution caused by

the carbon dioxide expected to be released into the atmosphere from underground can be half absorbed by the trees on the 100,000ha of land it manages there, and half released.

To help with environmental costs the company is seeking \$30m (21.67m) in grants and \$40m in loans from the Global Environment Fund managed by the World Bank.

Geothermal energy projects may, in the words of a paper produced by PGI, "tend to be more environmentally benign than the conventional alternatives", but even geothermal power, it seems, cannot produce electricity without some cost to the environment.

## Academic brains go up for sale

By Hillary de Boer

Are you uncertain what

to do with your company's hazardous waste? Keen to clean up an smelly rubbish tip?

British universities are eager to help. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is undoubtedly toying with the idea of environmental clearances.

"About a third of the 25 to 30 wells will be for re-injection and therefore to help the environment," he says, rejecting suggestions that the re-injection is necessary in any case to maintain the pressure of the fluid reservoir.

Of the 54,000-hectare national park, 70ha has been set aside for the PNOC and only about 100ha will be used, he says, although environmentalists have expressed concern that the road built by PNOC and the future development will open the park up to further degradations by farmers and loggers.

At PNOC's Mt Apo project all the fluid will be re-injected into the ground in line with a "zero-discharge policy", Vasquez says.

"While before we could just walk into an area and develop it, the (Aquino) government opted to seriously consider environmental clearances."

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## FT LAW REPORTS

## Surveyor may owe duty of care

THE NICHOLAS H.  
Queen's Bench Division  
(Commercial Court):  
Mr Justice Hirst:  
July 2 1992

A SHIPS' classification society owes a duty of care capable of giving rise to a liability in damages to cargo-owners if its surveyor's recommendation influences shipowners to sail a defective ship and, as was reasonably foreseeable, she sinks with the cargo on board.

Mr Justice Hirst so held on a preliminary issue in an action by Marc Rich & Co AG, owners of cargo carried on Nicholas H, against the Japanese classification society, Nippon Kaiji Kyokai.

HIS LORDSHIP said the action arose out of the total loss on March 9 1986 of Nicholas H and her cargo on a voyage from Peru and Chile to Italy and the Soviet Union.

The cargo consisted of lead and zinc concentrate owned by Marc Rich. The total pleaded value of the lost cargo was over \$8m.

The action was begun against the shipowners and Nippon. The owners sought to limit liability under the Hague Rules, and the claim against them was settled for \$500,000. The action against Nippon was for the \$5.5m balance.

The claim against Nippon was in tort. The preliminary issue was whether on the facts pleaded Nippon owed a duty of care to Marc Rich capable of giving rise to liability in damages.

For the purposes of the preliminary issue only, the facts were assumed.

The vessel loaded at Callao in Peru and Antofagasta in Chile.

On February 23 1986 she anchored off San Juan, Puerto Rico, with a crack in her hull. Further cracks developed. Arrangements were made for Nippon to survey the vessel at anchor.

The surveyor's report recommended that repairs be carried out at the nearest port prior to sailing to Italy, and that the vessel be retained as classed subject to those conditions.

The recommendation would have involved permanent repairs, for which facilities were available locally.

Temporary repairs were carried out. The shipowners balked at carrying out the recommended permanent repairs.

The vessel was surveyed again. The surveyor recommended that she proceed to Italy, the repairs to be examined and dealt with as necessary after discharging cargo.

On March 2 the vessel sailed.

The following day the temporary repairs cracked. On March 9 she sank with all her cargo. There were no casualties.

Marc Rich alleged that Nippon was negligent in altering the initial recommendation and permitting the vessel to continue her voyage when only temporary repairs had been carried out.

Mr Gross for Marc Rich contended that as a result of recent decisions the law had drawn a clear dividing line between physical damage cases and economic loss cases.

He said that in physical damage cases all the plaintiffs needed to do to establish a duty of care was to prove (i) foreseeability that lack of care might result in harm; and (ii) ownership or appropriate possessory interest in the property physically damaged or lost.

He submitted there was no need to make good the two additional criteria which applied in economic loss cases, namely (iii) proximity and (iv) that it would be "fair, just and reasonable" to impose a duty of care in tort.

If he was wrong on his main submission he submitted he could make good his case on (iii) and (iv) on the assumed facts.

Mr Aikens for Nippon submitted that the general principles stated in economic loss cases were equally applicable to physical damage cases and that there was no room for (iii) and (iv) applied.

His basic submission was that since a shipowner was under a non-delegable duty as bailee to take care of cargo there was no room for the imposition of a further duty on a classification society.

He argued that Nippon had the closest and most direct relationship with the shipowners, so that the undoubted claim against them and the suggested claim against Nippon were mutually exclusive.

In *Grant v Australian Enticing Mills* [1990] AC 85 it was argued by the defendant manu-

facturers of a defective garment which the plaintiffs had bought from an intermediate retailer, that the contractual relationships covered the whole field and excluded any question of tort liability.

Lord Wright disposed of the argument. He said the claims in contract, based on independent causes of action and different considerations, were irrelevant to the claim in tort. He said "the tort liability is independent of any question of policy which would otherwise have been upheld.

On the assumed facts there was a very close degree of proximity between the surveyor and Marc Rich. Although he had no direct physical control over the vessel the decisive influence on the shipowners which his second recommendation must have had, and would reasonably be foreseen to have, was very akin to control.

Therefore, on the assumed facts, a sufficiently close and direct relationship of proximity was established.

That conclusion was based simply on those assumed facts, and had no general application to any other situation which might arise between a classification society and cargo-owners or other third parties with whom it was not in contractual relationship.

There were no special public policy considerations which justified application of the "fair, just and reasonable" criterion. If, however, that was wrong, the court was satisfied there was nothing on public policy grounds to deprive Marc Rich from making good the duty of care.

On the facts pleaded Nippon did owe Marc Rich a duty of care capable of giving rise to a liability in damages.

The word "capable" was emphasised because nothing in the judgment should be interpreted as establishing that Nippon actually owed such a duty of care. The assumed facts were in issue and could only be determined on a full trial after all the evidence had been heard.

For Marc Rich: Mr Peter Gross QC (Lovell White Duran).

For Nippon: Mr Richard Aikens QC and Jonathan Harvie (Norton Rose).

Rachel Davies  
Barrister

The "fair, just and reason-

able" criterion was a relevant test in economic loss cases. The only physical damage case in which it was applied was *Dorset Yacht* [1970] AC 1004, where exceptional policy considerations existed.

That criterion would be relevant very exceptionally in physical damage cases, and then only if the defendants could establish that public policy considerations required the court to give immunity from a duty of care which would otherwise have been upheld.

That the assumed facts there was a very close degree of proximity between the surveyor and Marc Rich. Although he had no direct physical control over the vessel the decisive influence on the shipowners which his second recommendation must have had, and would reasonably be foreseen to have, was very akin to control.

Therefore, on the assumed facts, a sufficiently close and direct relationship of proximity was established.

That conclusion was based simply on those assumed facts, and had no general application to any other situation which might arise between a classification society and cargo-owners or other third parties with whom it was not in contractual relationship.

There were no special public policy considerations which justified application of the "fair, just and reasonable" criterion. If, however, that was wrong, the court was satisfied there was nothing on public policy grounds to deprive Marc Rich from making good the duty of care.

On the facts pleaded Nippon did owe Marc Rich a duty of care capable of giving rise to a liability in damages.

The word "capable" was emphasised because nothing in the judgment should be interpreted as establishing that Nippon actually owed such a duty of care. The assumed facts were in issue and could only be determined on a full trial after all the evidence had been heard.

For Marc Rich: Mr Peter Gross QC (Lovell White Duran).

For Nippon: Mr Richard Aikens QC and Jonathan Harvie (Norton Rose).

Rachel Davies  
Barrister

The "fair, just and reason-

Non-executive  
directors

■ Rob Margetts, chairman and chief executive of Thoride Group, who was recently appointed to ICI's board, at ENGLISH CHINA CLAYS.

■ Brian Wenham, formerly controller of BBC2 and md of BBC Radio, at BMH COMMUNICATIONS.

■ Jack Nardocchia has retired from ROSERAUGH.

■ Ian Maclellan, group md of Istock Johnson, at HOWDEN GROUP.

■ Edward Jaynes has retired from WHEATLEY.

■ Richard Cole-Hamilton, chief executive of Clydesdale Bank, at SECURITIES TRUST OF SCOTLAND.

■ Hugo Schreiber at BOOSEY & HAWKES.

PEOPLE  
Next steps at Alexander Proudfoot

Alexander Proudfoot, the world's biggest quoted management consultancy, is replacing its chief executive with a committee.

■ Thomas Huhn, the ex-Chicago Bears football player and Proudfoot's group chief executive since 1987, has retired and his responsibilities are being assumed by an expanded management committee.

■ Neil Hamilton (right), the company's 60-year-old finance director, will chair the management committee. Hamilton says that Huhn had decided that after \$2 million of "running for an aeroplane every Monday morning" it was time for some one else to take over.

The company says that having undertaken a detailed review of its operations over the past few months, it has now decided to expand the management committee to which basis and include those members responsible for the operating performance of its three main geographic regions. Alan Steelman, 46, will be responsible for implementing operational decisions.

Proudfoot, a US firm which got a UK stock market listing after it reversed into Lord Stevens' City and Foreign Holdings in 1987, has managed to buck the recession better than many of its rivals.

At the same time as it announced Huhn's retirement, the company stated that trading conditions have marginally improved and it is anticipated that earnings per share for the second half of the year will be modestly better than the first.

The company confirmed that based on current trading conditions the dividend will be maintained even though it is likely that earnings cover will be reduced. David Forster of Kleinwort Benson Securities estimates that full year profits will fall by around a fifth to \$20 million.

The 56-year-old Huhn, who joined Proudfoot in 1961, will continue to serve as a consultant and will assist in the hand-over of selected clients.

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Stockdale will be responsible for new projects, including the implementation of large scale engineering projects at the Torness and Hunterston B advanced nuclear reactors (AGR) stations.

He will also be in charge of corporate development, which will cover joint ventures and alliances with other companies, as well as expansion of Scottish Nuclear's business in eastern Europe where it is offering its expertise to the operators of the somewhat questionable Soviet-designed nuclear power stations.

A Yorkshireman, Stockdale trained as an engineer and worked for Foster Wheeler, the US design engineering company, later joining Scottish Power in Glasgow in 1990 as project group manager. He was briefly managing director of engineering resources where he succeeded Robin Jeffrey, after the latter became ceo of Scottish Nuclear earlier this year. He has now followed Jeffrey to Scottish Nuclear's headquarters in East Kilbride.

■ Sir David (below) has accepted non-executive directorships at St Modwen Properties, based in Birmingham; at Dunlop Heywood, consultant surveyors with headquarters in Manchester; and at P&P, a computer services company based in his former constituency, Rossendale.

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JULY 15

## Erasure

THE music is electronic Peer Gynt; the back-cloth pine trees and - oddly - pirouetting cygnets. On-stage processes an electronic swan, driven by a man in a fluffy white boa and spangly tresses. No, not the latest flight of fancy by English National Opera but a rather sedate entrance by Andy Bell, the voice of *Erasure*.

*Erasure* are the tabloid version of Pet Shop Boys, a camp duo (the gnome-like Vince Clarke looks after the music) who have been worthily successful with albums that knit up-front lyrics ("A Little Respect") with disco rhythms, and a commitment to stage spectacles which thrill the mass market and even get approving nods from the gay community.

At the Hammersmith Odeon for the next week, there is a traditional non-stop variety show. The Pet Shop Boys have similar ambitions, but while their performances look as if they have been modelled on some contemporary Belgian dance troupe, *Erasure* seem inspired by the late night revues put on at the Gargoyle, or one of those extinct night clubs that catered for Arabs.

The eight dancers stream on in costumes ranging from red plastic to lyrical bikinis: and how glad you are to see them. Without the business, the charms of Andy Bell, a *Gazza* figure without the footballer's wit, would quickly pall.

Bell is my sticking point about the show. I admire a man who performs happily wearing Y-fronts. I liked his sturdy voice. I was almost touched when he slipped on red shoes to sing "Over the rainbow", but could he not manage one witty remark, one less-than-cajolic expression?

This apart, *Erasure* offers one of the best musical tickets in town. Their *Abba* parody, which has taken them to the top of the charts, is rather tossed away on stage, but there are enthralling cancoes, Clarke, who hides his gaudiness inside some kind of mobile farm cart, is intriguing, with his poker face and occasional desire to dress as *Mac West*; the dancers show classical poise; the backing singers are identical twins from Mauritius, an obvious plus.

The most successful sequence is a lively cowboy number, when Bell, wearing a tinsely blue outfit designed to show off his bottom, rouses the crowd by singing "Stand by your man". Fun, but some how predictable.

The audience was packed with happy bopping kids rather than gays, which suggests that *Erasure* is more committed to pop success than taking camp into yet more outrageous territory.

Antony Thornicroft



A formidable duo preparing men's just deserts: Rose (Billie Whitelaw) and Jayshree (Madhur Jaffrey) in *Firm Friends*

Television/Christopher Dunkley

## Feminists to a man

SINCE we no longer seem to have the sort of judges who quaver

"What are the Be-  
dies?" we really ought to slap a preservation order on Lord Rees-Mogg, who clearly comes from the same club. Peering out from behind those spectacles and speaking in that endearing lisp, he delivers wonderfully pokey pronouncements upon television.

His latest corker is the assertion that because television is run largely by men, television drama is dominated by male attitudes and male fantasies, and for evidence he cites the sex scenes in Melvyn Bragg's *A Time To Dance*.

It seems his attention was drawn to this by complaints to his clean-up group. How many complaints? Conveniently he cannot remember. More than 30? "Oh no, less than that." It would not be surprising if it was fewer than 30, since the BBC's monthly aggregation of complaints by category shows that sex comes way down the list, usually "unnumbered" 30, 30 or 40 times by complaints about scheduling ("Why, oh why must you drop children's programmes to stay with the team?").

Disparaging men as a group, of course, highly fashionable (imagine programmes taking the same attitude to black people) and is unlikely to harm *Eldorado*. The word "flip" has been used widely to describe a first night audience of men, a figure undreamed of in the circulation departments of the word.

Twice as many people, we are told, watched ITV's spoiler - the 60-minute *Coronation Street* special. What we are not told, though it must surely be significant now that more than

80 per cent of British homes have video recorders, is how many regular *Street* viewers, who presumably constitute the bulk of *Eldorado*'s target audience, were taping the newcomer while watching their old favourite.

No soap opera ever started at the top of the ratings, and the proof of the *Eldorado* pudding will, as usual, be in the eating. Leaving aside the quality of the drama, this promises to be a long term winner. The idea of using the sunny Spanish setting, familiar to so many package-tour Britons, as the permanent location looks shrewd (a perpetual holiday) and the success of the Australian soaps suggests that the teenage element will also be a big attraction.

Whether the BBC ought to be spending £10m a year on such stuff is another question, but 12 months from now, when *Eldorado* is nudging *Coronation Street* at the top of the ratings, the BBC will use it as proof that they do not merely spend the licence fee on point-headed drama but serve all the public minority but serve all the public some of the time.

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Of course newspapers love "trends" which show television viewing

## FINANCIAL TIMES

Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL  
Tel: 071-873 3000 Telex: 922186 Fax: 071-407 5700

Wednesday July 15 1992

## South Africa at the UN

THE COLLAPSE of constitutional talks in South Africa, rising political violence, an impending general strike and the growing antagonism between President F.W. de Klerk and the African National Congress (ANC) leader, Mr Nelson Mandela, are a dangerous and volatile combination.

What lies in store for the republic may well be a painful and protracted confrontation between white and black nationalism that outsiders are helpless to avert. But if today's emergency meeting of the UN Security Council can help curb the violence that led the ANC to break off talks, thus assisting the parties to return to the negotiating table once more, the opportunity to do so should be seized.

Such an opportunity may, in fact, exist. Mr de Klerk's offer to accept the presence of international observers as part of a fresh multi-party initiative to combat violence falls far short of Mr Mandela's call for an UN monitoring force. But it is welcome, nevertheless. The offer will be more credible if Mr P. Botha, the South African foreign minister, makes a convincing case when he sets out the government's position on violence and the constitutional negotiations before the Security Council. The government has the means to quell most of the violence; it must demonstrate it also has the will.

On its own, a group of international observers, backed by military and police advisers – which is what Mr de Klerk may have in mind and the Commonwealth secretariat has already proposed – will probably be ineffective. But there already exists a framework in which such observers could operate as facilitators of the peace process, providing support and advice to local institutions, all the while reminding the warring parties that they are coming under increasing international scrutiny.

### Sensible agreement

Part of that framework is the National Peace Accord signed last September by all leading parties, including the ANC, the government and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party. This document has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

## No revolution for British Rail

IN REACHING a verdict on yesterday's white paper on the future of British Rail, it is necessary first to ask what it is trying to achieve. Anyone who had hoped for revolutionary change is likely to be disappointed. But if the goal is a better railway, then it offers – potentially – a step in the right direction. However, without further radical changes in transport policy, the white paper is unlikely to improve rail services greatly – and could even accelerate their decline.

By common consensus, there is much that is wrong with BR. A long period of underinvestment in the 1970s and 1980s has left it without the equipment needed to deliver a uniformly attractive and reliable passenger service. The deficiency is especially noticeable on some of the more heavily used commuter services in London and south-east England. The problem is exacerbated by a management culture that has only recently started to grapple with the idea that BR exists for the convenience of its customers rather than its employees.

Privatisation could, in theory, put this right – first, by giving the railways access to private capital for investment; and second, by leading to a radical change of culture among managers and staff. But after years of wrestling with different ways of achieving this desirable objective, the government has had to accept that, even taking into account the potential for efficiency gains, there is not enough profit to be had from Britain's railways to attract any buyers. There will be no glitzy sale of BR shares to the general public in this privatisation.

### Evolutionary approach

The government has, instead, opted for an evolutionary approach. For the present, only the freight operations and the stations are to be offered for sale, while the railway tracks will remain under BR's ownership. Private-sector operators will be invited to introduce new services to BR's tracks, but the only significant change to BR's existing passenger services is that the private sector will be invited to bid for franchises to run them.

Insofar as this counts as privatisation at all, it is a pretty watered-down version. True, the franchis-

Yet it remains an eminently sensible agreement which, given political will on all sides, could form the basis for resolution of the conflict in South Africa. Among other elements, it contains a code of conduct for the security forces and political parties. It also provides for local and regional committees to resolve political disputes. Its work would be enhanced by the advice of international observers.

### International inquiry

Such a group would also be able to draw on the investigations of a judicial inquiry into township violence under Mr Justice Goldstone, whose integrity and independence is not in question. The commission has started an investigation of last month's massacre at Boipatong, in which 42 people died. Two international legal experts have joined the commission, which goes some way towards meeting the ANC call for an international inquiry into the massacre.

If Mr de Klerk genuinely wants to resolve his country's crisis, he needs to do more. The South African government must tell the UN today that security force units notorious for their brutality, such as 32 Battalion, will be disbanded, as will police units consisting of former members of Koevoet, the counter-insurgency force that once operated in Namibia; that carrying of dangerous weapons in public will be banned and the law enforced; and that hostels, the source of much of the friction in the Johannesburg region, will be upgraded and properly policed.

This is merely to put into effect proposals previously advanced by Justice Goldstone's commission, which began sitting last year and recently condemned the government's inadequate response in terms amounting to an indictment of Mr de Klerk's handling of the violence wracking South Africa. To ignore the commission's recommendations, Justice Goldstone said, "can only be calculated to diminish if not destroy the credibility and effectiveness not only of the commission but also of the government". If President de Klerk can satisfy an international observer group that he is taking heed of this warning, then South Africa's peace process could be put back on track.

**It is a manager's vision that assumes a collaborative instinct in society and quarrels with the notion that Conservatism runs with the self-interested grain of human nature. "We are only fulfilled properly in the community. Of course we want a good house and a good job... but we also want a decent society that cares for the less well-off."**

Labour's 16th party leader traces such convictions to his Highland roots as the oldest child of a primary school headmaster in Ardchattan, an isolated coastal village situated half way down Argyll's misty Kintyre peninsula.

A cheerful child, his earliest influences stemmed from the presbyterian socialism of his father Archi-

eling arrangement offers scope for the private sector to inject that much-sought-after change in management culture, but this is about all. Depressingly, since the tracks and most of the trains will remain in BR's ownership, so will most of the responsibility for railway investment, which means it will be just as tightly constrained by the public sector borrowing requirement as ever.

### Substantial upgrading

In practice, therefore, there is little chance that passengers will see big changes in services in the near future. Franchises are likely to be interested in running only the few lines that have already benefited from substantial upgrading. Even here, their enthusiasm will be determined by how much money they believe they can make from a franchise, which will hang in turn on how much they have to pay for the use of BR's tracks.

It is on this crucial issue of track charges that the success of rail privatisation depends. Railways are in tough competition with other transport modes, particularly roads. If would-be train operators find that railway track costs are disproportionately high, compared with the cost of using the roads, they are unlikely to see any potential for acceptable returns; and privatisation, with all its potential benefits, will fail.

Indeed, there is a danger that BR will be left with the rail network and the least profitable services, while the cream is skimmed by the private sector. The Treasury would be even less willing or able to find the greater amounts needed to finance the necessary modernisation.

Nevertheless, by separating the track infrastructure from the trains, yesterday's white paper at least creates an opportunity to encourage a socially desirable transfer of traffic from road to rail, by levelling out the relative costs of access to the two. Since the government is unlikely to increase subsidies to the railways to reduce track costs, charges should be raised for road users to reflect the social costs of additional traffic, by means of a combination of higher fuel taxes and tolls on motorways. If the government fails to increase costs to road users, the rail revolution could be a long time coming.

**I**t will be more a coronation than an election. Shortly after 2.30pm on Saturday, Mr John Smith will win the Labour party leadership by such a large margin of votes that the necessity for a three-month-long contest has already been called into question.

Nonetheless, what has long been seen as a *fait accompli* will bestow upon the new leader a formidable measure of authority. That said, the mood in London's gloomy Royal Horticultural Hall is likely to be more sober than ecstatic.

Though many of Mr Smith's supporters privately believe that it was he, not Mr Neil Kinnock, who should have led Labour into April's general election, some feel that, at 53, he may not be the perfect choice for the next election in 1996-97.

Further, although Labour MPs agreed that there is no alternative for now, doubts remain as to whether a cautious Scottish lawyer can persuade the electorate to abandon Mr John Major's leadership for his own.

"It will be our bank manager versus their bank manager," one cynical Labour frontbencher muttered recently. "The question I ask is: how do we persuade the public to risk moving their accounts?"

That is the pessimists' view, born out of Labour's still unrelied depression and a lacklustre leadership campaign that signally failed to function as an effective post-mortem on the election defeat.

There are others, however, who believe that Mr Smith's accession may be unexpectedly timely. His age and natural authority, they claim, will contrast usefully with that of a still inexperienced prime minister, lending Labour a gravitas essential to complete the long march back to electability.

The flamboyant Kinnock era of platform oratory, behind-the-scenes fixing and head-on confrontation with the Trotskyite left has purged the party of its early 1980s extremism in a way that would have been more difficult for a leader from the right wing of the party.

Now, just three months after the election, the economy and Europe have left the government again looking divided – ripe for the forensic skills of a heavyweight Edinburgh advocate whose despatch box credentials are already proven.

Mr Donald MacCormick, the television journalist and friend from university days, remembers that unlike other students, Smith was already a figure in Scottish politics, attending conferences, canvassing in local elections and, at 23, vigorously contesting the safe Tory seat of East Fife in 1981.

"He was by no means the statesman-like prime minister in waiting, but where some of us were dilettantes, John was already professional," he observed.

That single-mindedness took Smith to the Scottish bar – an option that combined security with the chance to hone debating skills. By the time the 31-year-old Smith was elected for Ayrshire and Carrbridge (later North Lanark) in 1970, colleagues at the Scottish bar agreed he was throwing away a career that would have offered for future if not fame. Yet within little more than a year in parliament, he risked jetsetting his political future by joining the 60 Labour rebels who ignored a three-line whip and backed Britain's accession to the European Community.

It was his first and only serious confrontation with the party establishment. Despite his rebellion, promotion came rapidly. After declining Harold Wilson's offer of a Scottish job, he rose swiftly to Minister of State at Energy under Mr

John Smith combines charm with menace, but can he persuade voters to support the Labour party, asks Ivo Dawnay

## Scottish sword-play



Tony Benn – who, though often an opponent, still describes himself as "able and charming". Under Jim Callaghan's leadership in 1977-78, Smith's barrister's skills were put to use in the effort to devolve powers to Scottish and Welsh national assemblies against the formidable unionist obstacles of Mr Tam Dalyell, the Labour maverick, and Mr Enoch Powell.

His reward – despite defeat in the subsequent referendum – was to be (at 39) Callaghan's youngest cabinet minister at the Department of Trade, Prices and Consumer Protection, enough time to introduce legislation against insider trading before the election defeat of 1979.

vatives most fear. What is more, inside a party criticised for being driven by the whims of public opinion, his loyalty to an old-fashioned redistributive Labourism has won him respect.

"I haven't basically changed my political stance since I was a student," he commented. Was that a good thing? "I don't know... but it is slightly better than all those left-wingers who are now Thatcherite stockbrokers," came the reply.

Yet for all this admirable consistency, serious doubts must remain as to whether the electoral momentum can be conquered. Few believe the seven and a half percentage points that divided the two main parties in April can be bridged by integrity and personality alone.

The party leader-to-be has given some clues as to how he means to proceed. For up to a year, detailed policy issues will be put to one side to allow a wide-ranging debate on the goals of a modern social democratic party as it approaches the millennium.

It is clear that the aim is to conquer new ground by remodelling the state as champion of the individual against entrenched vested interests, whether of the public sector or privatised industries. Stress will be placed on government as pro-active "empowerer" of the community's collective interests.

The broad thrust of Labour's 1992 manifesto is unlikely to undergo radical revision. It is the tone and packaging of its proposals for reviving industrial investment and enhancing education and skills training that will be given greater prominence. Mr Smith's conviction is that the nitty-gritty business of making Britain function more efficiently should take precedence over all else.

Nonetheless, the rumbling symbolic battles over the role of the unions, the party constitution's Clause Four (which advocates state ownership), or electoral reform, all threaten to set the self-proclaimed "modernisers" against party conservatives. Both sides will expect the leader's backing. His instincts tend to lie closest to opponents of deep-rooted change but finding compromises will test his untried skills of party management.

As some of his Kinnockites critics have argued, the canny shadow chancellor often kept out of the firing line when some of the biggest battles of the past decade were being fought. He has never been a member of the party's policy-making national executive committee, of which he will now be *prima pars*. Collegiate by instinct, confident by nature, Smith is promising to end the bunker mentality of the Leader of the Opposition's office and integrate it with party headquarters in Walworth road. Yet his strategy for winning the backing of his party and the electorate at the next election is ultimately based, in his own ponderously legalistic phrase, on "analytical reasoning and persuasive exposition".

His admirers believe that if he can convey both his own good nature and his seldom exposed passion for the party, Smith could shed some of the boring bank manager image. He is ready to embrace whatever changes are necessary, whether it be in policy or the party's internal structures. But his core values – a very Scottish species of practical Christian socialism – are not negotiable.

Indeed, he is convinced his task now is to persuade the electorate to make them theirs. It must remain in question whether the south of England will ever be ready to do so.

## LOMBARD

## Tragi-comedy of errors

By Anthony Harris

"I have heard all the arguments before, only the countries using them change from time to time" – Professor Posthuma of the Netherlands Bank, quoted in De Vries, *The Non-reform of the International Monetary System*, 1976.

**N**obody who had to report on the international crises of the 1960s and 1970s can watch the present argument within the European Monetary System without an agonising sense of *déjà vu*. There is one huge change: the Americans are now on the sidelines. Floating has its own problems, but does confer a degree of freedom. A system of fixed but adjustable exchange rates allows little room for conflicting interests, and so political horns may be truly locked and negotiations turn into a multilateral monologue – the term a frustrated Jeremy Morse coined to describe the futile wrangling in the Committee of Twenty (charged with designing a new world monetary system, and known for the past 18 years as the Interim Committee, thus confirming his pessimism).

The rules of a fixed-rate wrangle require first a pivot currency, which is also the core store of value in the system. Within Europe the D-Mark has taken over this role, and with it, the charges that used to be brought against the Americans, and the defences they used to put up. German domestic policy has its main impact outside Germany, or as the French once said of the Americans, when they sneeze, the rest of the system catches pneumonia. But the Germans now argue, as the Americans did in the early 1970s, that this is a problem for their partners, not for them; they are free to adjust their policies, or their exchange rates, if that would

make them more comfortable.

The standard response, now as then, is to attack the domestic policies of the core country. The received wisdom of the rest of Europe is that German fiscal policy is too lax and its monetary policy too tight. A decade ago, exactly the same charges were made against President Ronald Reagan – though in a floating system, they were made with less heat. These charges are rejected by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in its new German report, although this does question the German stance on the growth of M3 as a policy target.

But there is no such thing as a new mistake; Lady Thatcher did the same. The standard response, now as then, is to attack the domestic policies of the core country. The received wisdom of the rest of Europe is that German fiscal policy is too lax and its monetary policy too tight. A decade ago, exactly the same charges were made against President Ronald Reagan – though in a floating system, they were made with less heat. These charges are rejected by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in its new German report, although this does question the German stance on the growth of M3 as a policy target.

However, history does contain partial solutions, as well as endlessly recurring problems. Three might be applicable here. First, countries with strong currencies can do something to keep their troubles and restraints at home, even if they allow free capital movements. From 1960 to 1976, the Germans or the Swiss repeatedly used withholding taxes, or special *bardepot* reserve requirements on their banks, to discourage foreign inflows. These measures were never fully effective – notably, they leave business in the strong-currency country free to borrow cheaply abroad; but they were partly effective, and would allow some interest-rate freedom for partners.

A second possibility would be for the Germans to bang heads together, as the Americans did in the early 1970s, but on a smaller scale. The whole Group of Five on the circling presidential yacht Sequoia, on a broiling Washington day, until they reached agreement. Under such pressure the French did agree to a rising D-Mark, the Japanese did revalue, and gold was demonetised. Or simplest (and unfortunately least probable), Germany could imitate another form of American floating, and leave the ERM for a time (an interim?) while reunification is sorted out, and float Reagan-like above their troubles and ours.

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Edward Mortimer

# Europe bares its claws

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
In a strange, crabwise fashion, Europe's "defence identity" continues to develop. Last December, in Maastricht, the nine member states of the Western European Union (WEU) declared their intention of developing that body "as the defence component of the European Union and as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance".

This week WEU is holding two meetings in Rome: one to open negotiations on the enlargement of its membership, which was also agreed in principle at Maastricht; the other to organise the naval operations, aimed at enforcing UN sanctions against Serbia, which were agreed in Brussels last week.

The Maastricht decision on enlargement concerns essentially Greece and Turkey. The former, as a member of the EC, and putatively therefore of the future European Union, is invited to "accede to WEU"; the latter, as a European member of WEU outside the EC, is invited to become an "associate member" of WEU with "the privilege of participating fully" in its activities.

The distinction is important to those, especially the French, who are determined that the EC must eventually evolve into a full political union with its own defence, separate from – even though still allied to – the US. Whereas for those (notably the British) to whom NATO remains the indispensable and irreplaceable framework of European defence, it was vital that European members of NATO such as Turkey should not be debarred from helping to "strengthen the European pillar".

Associate membership was a compromise solution. The trouble with it is that WEU is a mutual defence pact, whose members are obliged by treaty to go to each other's assistance if attacked. As a mere associate member, Turkey will not benefit from this guarantee, but will have to remain content with the slightly weaker guarantee in the Atlantic treaty, which says merely that an attack against any of the signatories, in Europe or the North Atlantic, will be considered an attack against all. So Turkey is being offered the dubious privilege of being invited to participate in WEU's activities, without obtaining the extra security that WEU membership should provide.

Even on those terms Britain and some others were unhappy about Greek membership, fearing that it would drag them into a Greek-Turkish conflict on the Greek side. That has now been avoided by last month's Petersberg Declaration.

Although a defence structure is developing, the relationship with NATO remains unresolved



that which specifies that the mutual assistance clause will not apply to conflicts between allies: a rather extraordinary situation, since it implies a licence for allies to attack each other with impunity. Since Greece traditionally regards Turkey as the most serious potential threat to its security, it would not be surprising if it decided that WEU membership on those terms was not worth having.

Meanwhile, the Adriatic mission is the first operation entrusted to WEU within Europe. Until now, NATO enthusiasts have suggested that WEU should only act outside the **Bosnia is serving as a laboratory in which formulae for European defence are tested** area, so as not to get in the way of the really important balance. That position has proved untenable; how can an organisation purporting to express a "European defence identity" be debarred from taking any direct part in the defence of Europe?

But the relationship between WEU and NATO is still far from satisfactorily defined. The two appear to be in competition in offering their services to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe for peacekeeping duties. In the



The Bundesbank sneezes, sterling gets a cold and Brian shoots at the cat

the control stick to Sir Colin Marshall raises the question of how much longer that other entrepreneurial 74-year-old – Lordrow – is going to hang on.

It is nearly 20 years ago since the late Sir Basil Smallpeice tried, and spectacularly failed, to recruit Tiny Rowland.

Smallpeice, along with two Conservative MPs – Duncan Sandys and Edward du Cann – had been one of three non-executives appointed to the Lordrow board following growing City disquiet about its financial affairs. However, Sandys and du Cann soon sided with Rowland and although Smallpeice commanded a majority of Lordrow's directors – the so-called straight eight – he and his supporters were booted out at the next meeting.

If the battle were to be fought again, Rowland could have a fight on his hands. Lordrow has cut its dividend and is selling UK assets to make ends meet.

The big difference now is that unlike British Airways, Lordrow does not have a sizeable cadre of non-executives to whom the chief executive can turn for advice.

## Herd heard

Are Japanese researchers putting the cart before the horse – or even the cow? British cows, at any rate, have an inbuilt body-clock which tells them when it is time to gather for milking or feeding. But it seems that Japanese farmers – suffering from both a shortage of herdsmen and a blind faith in technology – are resorting to playing music to announce bovine tea-time.

Last year, scientists at an experimental farm relayed music across the fields by loudspeaker and then put out feed for the animals. In 1988 he received £351,000 and

## Family fortunes

When the family owns the merchant bank the chairman should be allowed to pay himself what he likes. Even so there are bound to be a few raised eyebrows at the speed with which Sir Evelyn de Rothschild's salary has been rising lately. The family firm, N M Rothschild & Sons, must have been doing exceedingly well.

Over the past three years, Sir Evelyn has moved from being one of the City's lowest paid merchant bank chairmen to one of its highest paid. In 1988 he received £351,000 and

## Major redundant

Final proof that John Major's ruling Conservative party is no longer riddled with nepotism. One of the unfortunate victims of the government's decision to axe Ned, sacred cow of so many middle-of-the-road administrations, is the office manager – John Major.

**Tiny's challenge**  
Lord King's well-tried decision to call it a day at British Airways and hand over

## The Church and its finances

From Mr Alan Holme.

Sir, I refer to your article, "Unholy saga of the church's missing millions" (July 11). My wife and I are members of the St Margaret's parish church in Horsforth. We think the Archbishop of Canterbury should set up a commission to inquire into this disaster.

The British government is pleased with itself for having got other WEU members, including France, to accept the principle of strengthening NATO's "European pillar". Yet it refuses to accept the logical consequence, which would be to canalise the European contribution to NATO through WEU.

It is true that this is made more difficult by the fact that France does not belong to NATO's integrated command structure. NATO commanders are understandably bothered by the fact that the new Franco-German corps, now baptised "Eurocorps", will include some troops that are answerable to them and others that are not. Besides, is it questionable whether there is any military logic, in post-cold war Europe, in setting up a new main defence force composed largely of conscripts, when the strategic requirement is clearly for professional forces, flexible and highly mobile, able to undertake a variety of assignments at short notice?

But Britain's obsession with the supposed danger to NATO from the Eurocorps is such that Whitehall bristles even when a non-governmental US think tank, the Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, suggests that the US should take a more relaxed attitude on the matter. Yet the ostensible objection to the Eurocorps is that it will antagonise the Americans. Not for the first time, London seems determined to be more royalist than the king, or rather more Atlanticist than Washington.

Britain's desire to reintegrate France into the common defence of Europe is, if sincere, entirely laudable. But to keep insisting on French reintegration into the present structure of NATO is self-defeating.

On this point even the strongly Europeanist critique of British defence policy produced last week by the Institute for Public Policy Research\* has missed the point. The French do not want a Europeanised NATO, even under a European supreme commander. They want a genuine two-pillar alliance, with Europe's contribution mediated through a single structure, namely the WEU. I must be very obtuse, but I cannot see why that is such a bad idea, or why it is assumed that the US will be against it.

\**The Franco-German Corps and the Future of European Security: Policy Consensus Report, June 1992*

\*\**Buying the Bullet, by Malcolm Chalmers, IPPR, £9.95*

From Mr Peter Hines.

Sir, I refer to Alan Cane's excellent and well-balanced article on the subject of "altered" IBM memory (Technology, July 10).

The fact that altered memory is relatively simple. An increase in minimum reserve requirement rates will dampen bank credit expansion, without necessarily leading to increased money market interest rates. Therefore, one could

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL  
Fax 071 873 5938. Letters transmitted should be clearly typed and not hand written. Please set fax for finest resolution

## Minimum reserves answer to German monetary expansion

From Mr Wim Boonstra.

Sir, As German monetary expansion is purely a domestic phenomenon, the Bundesbank should pursue a policy that aims directly at its source, viz German bank credit. In addition, the bank should try to minimise adverse implications of its tight monetary policy for other EC countries.

In particular, this commission should do the following:

- Inquire into the reasons for this loss;
- Devise procedures to prevent the occurrence of a similar loss in the future.

Alan Holme,  
16 Harewood Hills Avenue,  
Horsforth, Leeds LS18 5JT

From Mr Oliver Lever.

Sir,

Before readers of your delightful article on the Church's missing millions (July 11) reach for their cheque books, may I point out that the figure of £12,000 as the pay of the clergy is misleading?

In December 1982, the

Church Commissioners, in a memorandum to the General Synod, estimated that a vicar was better off with his stipend of £5,000, plus his tax-efficient perks, than if he were to be paid £10,500 only, with no housing. Adjusting for inflation, the perks therefore now seem to be worth £20,000 making, with the average stipend of £12,800, a total of £20,800. In the interim, interest-free loans have been made available for purchase.

Oliver Lever,  
Blackacre,  
Back Lane,  
Makern, Worcs WR14 2HZ

To this end, it would be helpful if IBM would tell us whether or not IBM itself alters or reconfigures or creates "new" IBM memory which it then incorporates into its "new" machines out of used chips and memory cards in exactly the same way as the companies it is now suing.

Peter Hines,  
Managing Director,  
Computer Equipment Investors,  
11 Blades Court,  
Dearne Road,  
Putney, London SW16 2NU

## When memory is altered

From A J B Fjord.

Sir, Mr Brian McEvoy (Letters, July 11) wonders how the rail service will ever improve. By coincidence I came upon a letter written by my father in June 1925, on his

return home from Waterloo. Aged 25, he told his cousin that he had already had enough of commuting, which had driven him that day to compose: "This Beautifully Painted And Bloody Awful Train By everything that's holy I will not take again. I'll sell my season ticket And buy a private hearse. It may not travel faster. It cannot travel worse. And you, Sir Herbert Walker, When all men's patience fails Take up your true vocation Of cultivating Snails."

In a footnote he says that Sir Herbert Walker was the then general manager (LSWR). So it seems that things have not changed much in 67 years, which may give Mr McEvoy food for thought as he next waits at the signal.

A J B Fjord,  
The Old Malthouse,  
Brook, Godalming,  
Surrey GU8 5UL

## Nothing new after 67 years

From A J B Fjord.

Sir, Mr Brian McEvoy (Letters, July 11) wonders how the rail service will ever improve. By coincidence I came upon a letter written by my father in June 1925, on his

communal executive who is doing well in his new career. Your own article (Man in the News, July 11) about Taikichiro Mori who, at 88 and still active, is the richest businessman in the world, is a further indication that age need not be a barrier to success.

Sigmund Sternberg,  
Star House,  
Grafton Road,  
London NW5 4BD

## No good reason for advocating that Lord Weinstock should retire

From Sir Sigmund Sternberg.

Sir, Your series of articles on GEC comes to the fairly obvious conclusion that it is a successful, well-run company and that much of its success is due to the energy and wisdom, over many years, of its chairman, Lord Weinstock.

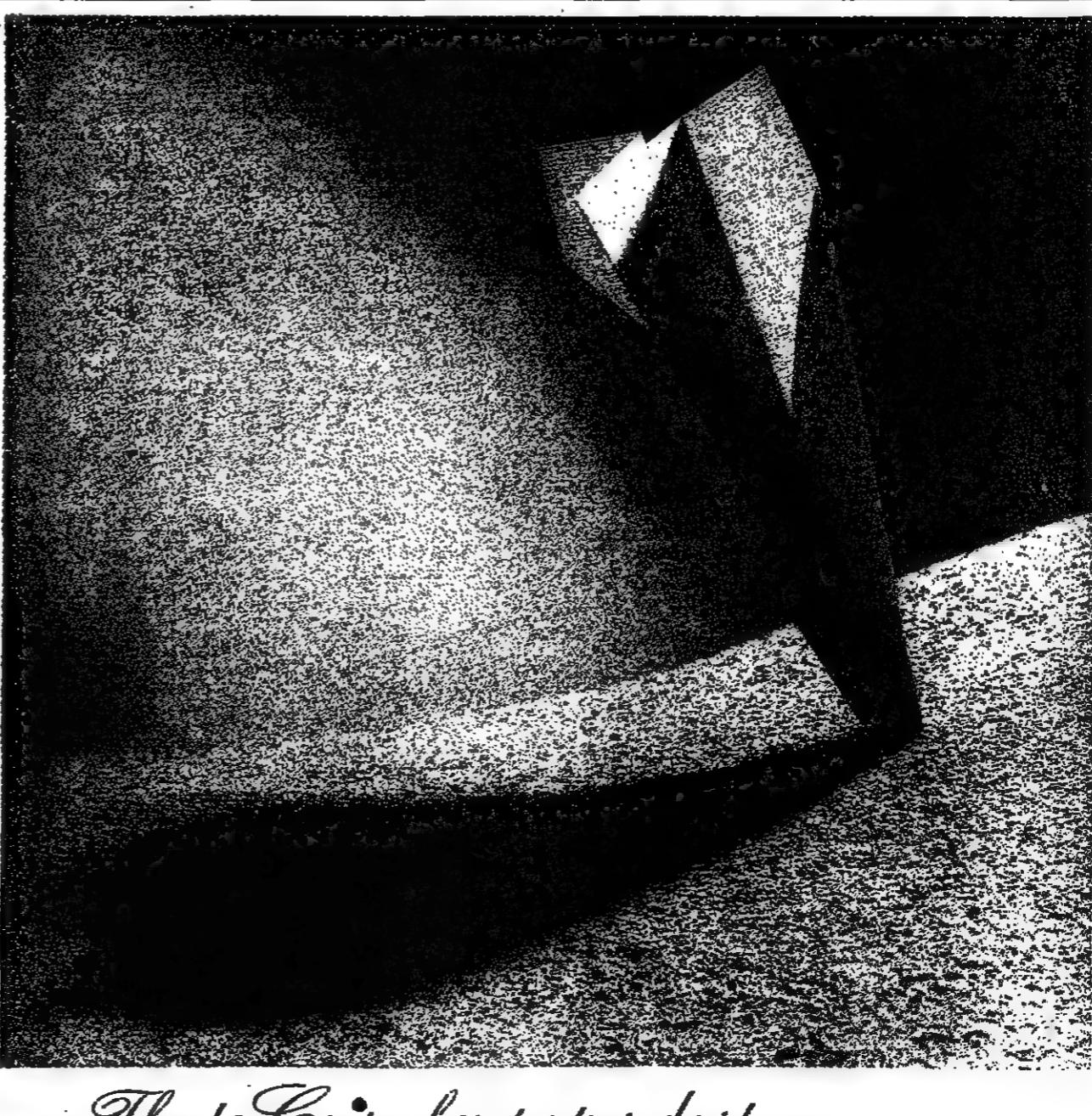
Nevertheless, you seem to believe that Lord Weinstock, who is 67, should retire and you say that the main institutional shareholders in GEC say

that "there is no question of Mr Simon Weinstock succeeding his father".

Both these statements are controversial to say the least. There are many successful companies which have, at their head, chairmen who are in their late 60s and 70s. Equally there are companies where son succeeds father over a number of generations. The Rothschild and Sainsbury families are examples, and there are others.

Lord Weinstock.

Likewise my charitable foundation's director is a retired



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INSIDE

**ING raises stake  
in BBL to 10.03%**

Banque Bruxelles Lambert, the Belgian bank, yesterday came under renewed pressure to choose Internationale Nederlanden (ING) as a strategic partner when the Dutch banking and insurance group revealed it had increased its stake in BBL to 10.03 per cent. ING said it had added a further percentage point to its BBL stake to demonstrate its determination to co-operate further with the bank. Page 18

**Triplex Lloyd hopeful despite fall**  
TSE-tax profits at Triplex Lloyd, the UK industrial engineering group, slipped 7 per cent in the 12 months to end-March as it fought the weakness of the building products market. Over the coming year, "automotive and engineering and power divisions are well positioned to sustain and indeed improve their profitability even if UK economic activity should remain depressed", according to Mr Colin Cooke, chairman. Page 22

**Unbalanced alliance**



The alliance agreed this week between Fujitsu, Japan's biggest computer company, and Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), ranking only fifth among America's semiconductor makers, is rather like a whale marrying a minnow and, one can only wonder, how long the whale will wait before it swallows its mate. However Mr. W. J. Sanders, AMD chairman, has structured a deal that could withstand the strains of the unlikely partnership. Page 20

**Kroger pulled down by strike**  
Kroger, the large US food retailer, yesterday reported an after-tax loss of \$29.4m in the three months to June 13. This compares with a \$30.6m profit in the same period a year earlier. The poor results are partly due to a strike by clerks and meatcutters in the Michigan region. Page 19

**Russian copper opening**

One of the largest copper deposits in the world - in Siberia - is to be opened up to international tender by the Russian government. The government will favour foreign companies which join a consortium with Russian corporations and financial groups and it will insist that equipment and labour is sourced in Russia. Page 24

**Birs drops into loss**

Birs Group, the UK building and civil engineering company, made a £13.2m (\$25.3m) loss during the year to the end of April. The loss compared with a pre-tax profit of £10m in the previous year. Page 23

**Market Statistics**

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Merchant Govt bonds	21	21	21	21
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AMF	20	Imeon	22
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Glaxo	22	Trust for Prop Shares	22
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Heaton	22	Welcome	25
Hitachi	18	Westinghouse Elec	19
Honeywell	18	Westpac	18
Hoogovens	18	Wood (John D)	22

**Chief price changes yesterday**

Fluors	18	Gabco	41	-	812
Agfa	227	+ 10	H-Tec Sports	77	- 25
British Land	183	+ 8	Imeon	99	- 4
BP	207 1/2	+ 6 1/2	Loews & Gen	348	- 4
Gl Porsland	127	+ 4	Lloyds Chem	348	- 10
Morris Ashby	103	+ 6	PE Int'l	72	- 10
Marubeni	217 1/2	+ 4	Prudential (A)	335	- 10
Reuters	178	+ 28	Rank Org	44	- 11
Stamps Ets	135	+ 11	Sandec Ets	55	- 9
Sterling Publ	56	+ 5	Varig	105	- 9
USI	129	- 4	Wilson Brothers	350	- 12
BET	31	- 7	Wood (John D)	32	- 2

Bernard Simon on the problems facing the Canadian family's convoluted empire  
**Bronfmans suffer from investors' unease**

A striking trend on the Toronto stock exchange (TSE) in recent months has been the unrelenting decline in the share prices of companies controlled by the Toronto branch of the Bronfman family.

At the very least, the falls signal the investment community's growing discomfort with the convoluted structure of the far-flung group, which includes such pillars of Canadian business as Noranda, the country's biggest mining and forestry group; Royal Trust, the second-largest trust company; and Trizec, North America's leading publicly-traded property developer.

But the selling may also reflect a deeper unease at the intricate cross-holdings that are a hallmark of the Bronfman empire, which controls assets worth about C\$100bn (US\$83.3bn) and between 5 per cent and 15 per cent of the market capitalisation of the TSE.

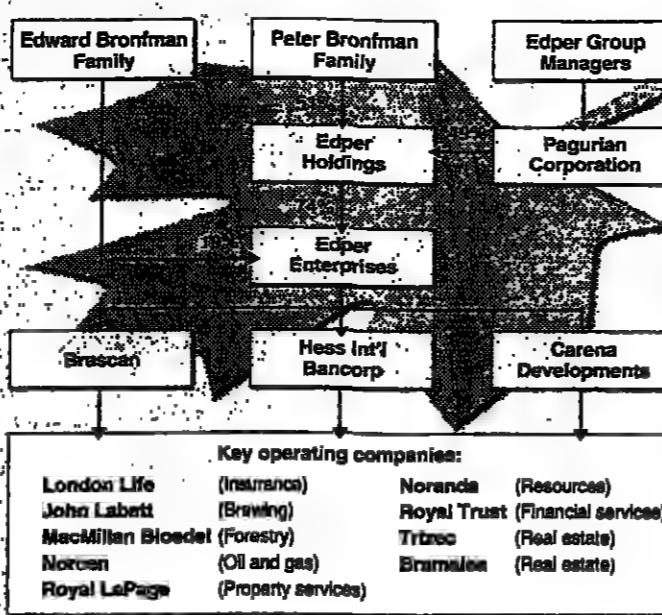
Investments by individual companies in each other's preferred shares may have created the perception that difficulties in one company could ripple through others. Between them, property companies Trizec and Bramales have a debt load of C\$14.7bn - C\$1bn more than the ailing Olympia & York.

"This is a group that functions on dividend payments," says the head of research at one Toronto securities firm. "If it doesn't get them, it runs out of oxygen."

Brothers Peter and Edward Bronfman are cousins of the heirs to the Seagram liquor fortune, although the two businesses are completely separate.

The 64-year-old Mr Edward Bronfman began disengaging himself in 1988, leaving Peter, 62, and his family with majority control of Edper Holdings, the top company of the group. Most of the remaining shares in Edper are held by the senior managers, led by South African-born Mr. Jack Cockwell, 51, through

**The Bronfman links**



**Key operating companies:**

London Life	(Insurance)	Noranda	(Resources)
John Labatt	(Brewing)	Royal Trust	(Financial services)
MacMillan Bloedel	(Forestry)	Trizec	(Real estate)
Norcan	(Oil and gas)	Bramales	(Real estate)
Royal LePage	(Property services)		

pany. Mr Cockwell and his colleagues decline to be interviewed. A spokesman said that they blame the drop in share prices on a misconception that problems at property developer Bramales, which is struggling to stave off bankruptcy, could undermine the rest of the group.

The property companies have taken the heaviest pounding in the stock market. Earlier this week, Bramales plunged to 78 cents, down from about C\$5 at the beginning of this year. Trizec's shares are bumping along at their lowest level for more than two decades.

Bramales last month halted common and preferred share dividends and Trizec cut its semi-annual dividend from 18 to 12 cents a share.

Cut off from the debt markets, Trizec also heavily diluted its equity last month with a C\$275m private placement which was

priced far below the value of its assets.

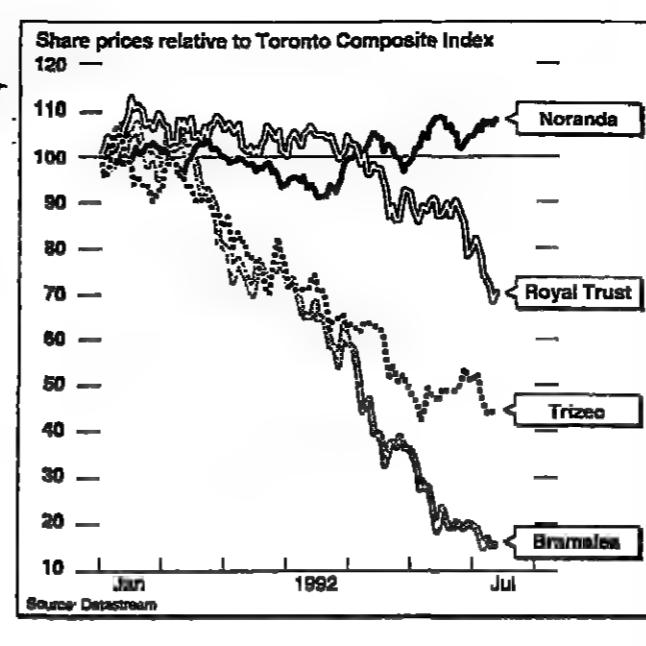
The question is whether other Bronfman companies will be forced to follow Trizec and Bramales' lead in trimming dividends. Judging by their share prices, the market seems to believe they will.

Hess International, the group's merchant banking arm, has fallen to a 52-week low of just above C\$10. Royal Trust has tumbled from C\$8.25 at the end of March to C\$6.38 this week. Edper Enterprises, the most senior publicly-traded company, also touched a one-year low of C\$4.10 earlier this month.

Beyond the property developers, concern is centred on Royal Trust, whose main business is home mortgages and other financial services.

RT's quarterly earnings have

failed to match dividends for the past two years, first as a result of



a string of problems in its European and US operations, and more recently, the property slump in Canada.

Mr Kersi Doodha, analyst with Maisons Placements Canada, said in a recent report that "management is of the view that so long as there is no permanent impairment" in profitability, payout of dividend higher than earned is justified. More conservative investors may have a contrary view."

An RT official insisted that the company was financially sound and knew of no reason why the share price should have dropped as far as it had. Nonetheless, share prices indicate that investors believe the quarterly dividend, currently at 18.5 cents a share, will be cut when interim results are published on July 23.

Noranda is another Bronfman company whose C\$1-per-share annual dividend has far exceeded

its profits in recent years.

Second-quarter earnings are also likely to be mediocre, and it is committed to heavy spending to combat pollution at its pulp and paper mills. But the directors appear to be hoping that profits will soon recover smartly on the back of a further upturn in commodity prices.

Mr Julian Baldry, analyst at Nesbitt Thomson in Toronto, predicts that "if necessary, [Noranda] will sell assets to maintain the dividends". If anything, the plunge in share prices could stiffen the resolve of some Bronfman companies not to cut dividends.

Compulsory share purchase schemes, often financed by bank loans, are another hallmark of the Bronfman management style. The last thing that executives, already staring a big capital loss in the face, want to see is a cut in their personal income stream.

At Merrill, investment banking remained the best-performing division, with revenues rising 27 per cent in the quarter to a record \$398m. Strong bond underwriting and a pick-up in M&A advisory business helped offset the slack IPO market.

Revenues from principal trading, particularly of government and municipal securities, corporate bonds and swaps, were

buoyant at \$352m, but lower than the \$375m earned in the first three months. There was a similar quarter-on-quarter decline in commission revenues, which reached \$589m, up 8 per cent on a year ago. Asset management and custodial fees rose slightly to \$21.7m, while non-interest expenses rose 13 per cent to \$1.7m.

It was a similar picture at PaineWebber. Revenues from

broking commissions, principal trading, investment banking and asset management all remained

strong but below record first-quarter levels. Merrill rose 5% to 52% and PaineWebber climbed 3% to 32% on the New York Stock Exchange.

**Earnings fall at US broking houses**

By Patrick Harverson  
in New York

FIRST SIGNS of a slowdown in business on Wall Street appeared yesterday when two of the biggest broking houses, Merrill and PaineWebber, both reported second-quarter earnings that were strong but below the record levels achieved in the first three months of the

## INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES AND FINANCE

## ING lifts stake in BBL to 10.03%

By Andrew Hill in Brussels

BANQUE Bruxelles Lambert, the Belgian bank, yesterday came under renewed pressure to choose Internationale Nederlanden (ING) as a strategic partner when the Dutch banking and insurance group revealed it had increased its stake in BBL to 10.03 per cent.

The BBL board will meet today to discuss whether it should link up with ING or with Crédit Communal, the publicly-owned Belgian credit institution.

ING said yesterday it had added a further percentage point to its BBL stake in order to demonstrate its determination to co-operate further with the bank. BBL is unlikely to make a firm decision today.

The boardroom debate is likely to revolve around the vexed question of whether Belgian companies should be allowed to fall under the influence of non-Belgian partners. According to opponents of such deals, that has been the fate of Société Générale de Belgique, Belgium's largest holding company, since France's Compagnie de Suez bought a majority stake.

But Brussels stockbrokers and the BBL's own management believe it would be shortsighted of the bank to ally itself with a strictly domestic institution like Crédit Communal, which is jointly-owned by all the municipalities and provinces of Belgium. "If BBL wants to grow on the European level it would be a little unhelpful to link up with a Belgian bank," said one BBL official yesterday.

Pressure from the Crédit Communal camp is also being stepped up. Last week, Banque Internationale à Luxembourg bought a 5.7 per cent stake in BBL from Groupe Bruxelles Lambert, the Belgian holding company which is the bank's largest shareholder. Crédit Communal is the Luxembourg bank's main shareholder, and Mr Albert Frère, who heads GBL, is believed to favour a Belgian future for BBL.

ING said in April that it was interested in buying all or part of the GBL stake.

## Hoogovens buys control of NB Steel

HOOGOVENS, the Dutch steel producer, has agreed to acquire the 60 per cent it did not already own in Norsk Blikkvalverk, of Norway. AP-DJ reports from Amsterdam.

NB Steel will add 130,000 tonnes a year to Hoogovens's annual steel production of 670,000 tons for the packaging industry.

The Dutch company declined to disclose revenues from its packaging steel business. However, prices presently run at between Fl 1,800 and Fl 1,200 (\$700) per tonne, depending on the type and quality of the steel being used, industry officials said.

Hoogovens said the full takeover of Bergen-based NB Steel would strengthen the Dutch company's position in the world packaging steel industry. Hoogovens acquired the initial 40 per cent stake in NB Steel in January 1990.

Meanwhile, Hoogovens declined to comment on a report that it is seeking a deferral of payments on a loan from the Dutch government.

Hoogovens is seeking to reschedule payments on the 10-year, Fl 370m subordinated loan issued in 1984 by the Economics Ministry, according to the report.

The loan was obtained to help finance a far-reaching restructuring plan following the collapse of Estel, its partnership with Hoesch, the German steel manufacturer.



Turbulent times: Iberia's losses indicate that an expected influx of visitors has failed to materialise

## Iberia turns in further losses

By Tom Burns in Madrid

IBERIA, Spain's government-owned air carrier, is continuing to make heavy losses despite a capital injection from public funds earlier this year and the high profile Spain has received as the host of the summer Olympic Games in Barcelona and of the Seville Expo '92.

According to Madrid newspaper reports, the airline lost up to Pta25bn (\$265m) in the first six months of the year. Iberia officials said the company did not release first-half results but conceded that losses had been substantial and that the reports were largely accurate.

Iberia admitted losses of Pta25bn over the same period last year and finished the 12 months Pta52.5bn in the red.

The officials said that overall losses this year were expected to be well down on the 1991 figures but were nevertheless likely to overshoot the target of a Pta20bn shortfall.

Iberia's disappointing performance so far this year risks raising further questions at the European Commission's Competition Directorate which is already investigating a first-quarter Pta120bn capital injection to the airline provided by INI, Spain's public sector conglomerate.

The directorate could rule that the recapitalisation, purported to finance Iberia's fleet renewal and the airline's expansion in Latin America, had instead been chiefly allocated to stemming losses.

The officials said there was an outside possibility that Iberia might have to pay back to INI 10 per cent, Pta12bn, of the funds it had received.

Iberia's losses also indicated that a hoped for influx of foreign visitors to Spain on account of the 1992 events had failed, so far, to materialise.

The officials said that revenue from the airline's European and transatlantic traffic had been considerably less than that which had been initially forecast.

Under an ongoing rationalising plan, designed in part to justify the capital injection, Iberia has reduced its 28,000 payroll by 1,600 over the past six months.

These were the first staff cuts in the company's history, and a further 1,600 employees will leave the company before the end of the year under early retirement and voluntary redundancy schemes.

## Westpac to quit London Eurobond market

By Richard Waters

WESTPAC yesterday became the last Australian bank to give up a significant presence in the London-based Eurobond market, following the departure of the ANZ group two years ago.

The bank's decision, which resulted in the loss of 20 jobs, also signals the poor return on capital earned by some banks in the Eurobond market, despite the high level of bond issuance this year.

The bank's departure leaves the Australian dollar section of the international bond markets almost entirely in the hands of non-Australian banks, led by Hambros and Deutsche Bank.

Westpac said the move was part of its strategy of concentrating on domestic customers. The bank had been active mainly as a trader of Eurobonds, rather than an underwriter, and so did not consider the operation essential.

Bond trading had been only marginally profitable and did not justify the A\$50m (US\$37.5m) of capital tied up in running its trading positions, the bank said. Instead, it said it will use the capital in higher-margin areas, such as commodity and equity derivatives and swaps.

In a further move to trim its London operations, Westpac said it would limit its corporate banking activities in the UK almost exclusively to servicing Australian clients. The decision is expected to lead to further redundancies. Westpac also announced the closure of its nine-person Paris branch.

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## Fondiaria chairman voted on to supervisory board of AMB

By Andrew Fisher in Frankfurt

AACHENER und Münchener Betreibergesellschaften yesterday followed up the ending of hostilities with Assurances Générales de France (AGF) by tightening links with another foreign minority shareholder, Fondiaria of Italy.

The French and German companies said last week they had reached agreement over the voting rights attached to AGF's stake. Previously, AMB had refused to recognise full voting rights on the holding, as was able to do under German company law. Now AGF

will be able to exercise these rights; in turn, it has dropped legal action against AMB on the issue and agreed to back the board at future annual meetings.

As expected, Mr Wolf-Dieter Baumgartl is stepping down as AMB's chief executive after failing to keep the French company at bay. Yesterday's decisions show that AMB is now

on much warmer terms with both AGF, which owns just over 25 per cent of its shares, and Fondiaria, which has 20 per cent. Recently, it has been speculated that Fondiaria might sell its AMB holding.

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will be able to exercise these rights; in turn, it has dropped legal action against AMB on the issue and agreed to back the board at future annual meetings.

Shareholders were also told yesterday by Mr Wilfried Bösen, the finance director, that AMB's results would at least match those of 1991, when net profits totalled DM74m (346m).

## Fiat to expand Japanese link-up

By Robert Graham in Rome

FIAT has decided to expand its co-operation with Japan's Hitachi and Sumitomo in the field of earth-moving equipment.

The Turin-based automotive group yesterday signed an agreement to form Fiat Hitachi Construction Equipment, controlled 50 per cent by Fiat, Hitachi Excavators and 20 per cent by NH Geotech. Fiat Hitachi Excavators is already

controlled 51 per cent by Fiat, 44 per cent by Hitachi and

5 per cent by Sumitomo.

The

new venture is to be controlled ultimately 51 per cent by Fiat through Geotech and based at Lecce in southern Italy. Whereas the previous venture combined the Italian group and the two Japanese companies' production and technology in hydraulic excavators, the new deal extends this to roller loaders, dozers and construction equipment.

The agreement follows the decision by John Deere earlier this year to pull out of a three-

## AKZO in top management reorganisation

AKZO, the Dutch chemicals group, has announced a reorganisation of senior management in line with the company's previously-announced restructuring. AP-DJ reports

that the group's board of management will be doubled to six members. Mr D. Westermann will retire on May 1, 1993, when the board changes take effect. The AKZO

## NEWS IN BRIEF

management team will continue to be headed by Mr Aarnout Lede, vice-chairman.

Ralphs Supermarkets, one of the largest supermarket operators in California with 186 stores, yesterday withdrew a proposed offering of 6.05m shares, writes Nikki Tait in New York. Ralphs is the latest in a line of companies which have either cancelled or scaled down share offerings recently. The food retailer said that the equity market was "dramatically different" from when it started the process.

This announcement appears as a matter of record only.

July 1992

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ABN AMRO Bank N.V.

Bankers Trust International PLC

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Credit Suisse First Boston Limited

Daewu Securities Co., Ltd.

Daishin International (Europe) Limited

Hanshin Securities Co., Ltd.

KDB Bank (UK) Ltd.

Merrill Lynch International Limited

Nomura International

Paribas Capital Markets Group

Sungkyong Securities Limited

Tong Yang Securities Europe Limited

Yamaichi International (Europe) Limited

## Métro de l'agglomération rouennaise (Rouen metropolitan area metro)

Borrower: Concession Company SOMETRAR

Credit facility: FRF 952 000 000

Lead manager - Arranger BANQUE PARIBAS

Co-arranger BANQUE NATIONALE DE PARIS

Associate lead manager CREDIT INDUSTRIEL DE NORMANDIE

Co-lead managers

CREDIT FONCIER DE FRANCE

ELECTRO BANQUE

Associate co-lead managers BAYERISCHE VEREINSBANK SA (SV FRANCE)

UNION DE BANQUES SUISSES

Participants BANQUE FRANÇAISE DU COMMERCE EXTERIEUR SDR DE NORMANDIE

CREDIT COMMERCIAL DE FRANCE

BANQUE FRANCO-ALLEMANDE BANQUE WORMS

CAISSE D'EPARGNE PROVENCE ALPES CORSE

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Agent



BANQUE PARIBAS

Chrysler Financial Corporation

US \$150,000,000 Floating Rate Notes due 1994

For the period from July 15, 1992 to October 15, 1992 the Notes will carry an interest rate of 5.75% per annum with an interest amount of US \$6.32 per US \$10,000 Note and of US \$463.15 per US \$10,000 Note.

The relevant interest payment date will be October 15, 1992.

Agent Bank: Banque Paribas Luxembourg Société Anonyme

(Formerly Bergen Bank A/S) (Incorporated in the Kingdom of Norway with limited liability)

U.S.\$75,000,000 Floating Rate Notes Due 1997

(with the right to subordinate) Payment Date: August 15, 1992 for the period February 13, 1992 to August 13, 1992 for the period October 14, 1992 to April 14, 1993 in respect of U.S.\$5,000 nominal of the Notes will be U.S.\$10,778.50 and in respect of U.S.\$320,000 nominal of the Notes will be U.S.\$389,50.

July 15, 1992 London By: Citibank, N.A. (Issuer Services). Agent Bank: CITIBANK

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## INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES AND FINANCE

## Primerica shows 28% profits rise

By Patrick Harverson  
in New York

PRIMERICA, the US financial services group, yesterday reported a 28 per cent rise in second-quarter profits to \$150.5m, due to a continued strong performance from its broking and investment banking subsidiary, Smith Barney.

The recent slowdown in Wall Street business activity, however, meant that second-quarter earnings for both Primerica and Smith Barney were below the record levels achieved in

the opening three months of the year.

Primerica earned \$220.5m in the first quarter, although almost one-third of that came from one-off sales of stock in subsidiaries.

Smith Barney earned \$42.4m in the April-June period, up 13 per cent on a year ago but well below the \$56.1m profit made in the first quarter. Earnings from retail broking operations and its institutional investment banking business were strong, but lower than the previous quarter.

## Honeywell ahead after settling patent claims

By Martin Dickson

HONEYWELL, the US controls company, yesterday reported a 10 per cent increase in second-quarter net income, due largely to gains from settlements in a long-running dispute over camera technology.

The group produced net income of \$85.1m, or \$1.22 a share, on sales of \$1.49bn, compared with income of \$77.6m, or \$1.10 a share, on sales of \$1.52bn in the same period of last year.

However, some \$7.4m, in after-tax profits, or 11 cents a share, was due to Honeywell's settlement with various companies for their use of the company's patented technology for automatic focusing cameras.

A court in New Jersey ruled in a test case in February that Minolta, the Japanese camera manufacturer, had infringed Honeywell's patent. Minolta subsequently agreed to settle the suit for \$127.5m, and since then Honeywell has been reaching settlements with other camera manufacturers.

It said yesterday it expected to report additional settlements in the third quarter.

In the second quarter, its home and building controls unit made \$46.5m in operating profits, up from \$32.1m a year earlier, on sales up from \$51.2m to \$56.7m.

The industrial unit made \$49.1m, down from \$58.1m on sales which rose from \$41.2m to \$46.4m. The company said a changing product mix and aggressive pricing competition meant lower margins.

The space and aviation business saw operating profits of \$63.6m, compared with \$66.6m, on sales down at \$460.5m, compared with \$545.5m. The sales drop was due to lower demand for commercial flight systems. The improved profit was attributed to "rigorous cost controls, a favourable product mix in military avionics and non-recurring inventory valuation adjustments in commercial flight systems".

## Rubbermaid optimistic

RUBBERMAID, the US rubber and plastic products group, is cautiously optimistic about the current year and expects to continue record sales and earnings, Reuter reports.

Rubbermaid posted second-quarter net income of \$43.7m, or \$0.27 a share, on sales of \$449.1m, compared with \$39.1m, or \$0.25 a share, on sales of \$417.5m in the second quarter of 1991.

## Boise Cascade posts \$45m loss

By Martin Dickson  
in New York

BOISE CASCADE, the US forest products group, yesterday announced a second-quarter net loss of \$45m and indicated it would remain in the red until 1993.

"If the economy continues to grow at a modest rate, and if we are able to obtain further modest increases in paper prices, Boise Cascade should return to profitability during 1993," said Mr John Fury, the chairman.

The second-quarter loss, which worked through at \$1.28 a share, compared with losses of \$32.5m, or 96 cents a share, in the same period of last year. Sales totalled \$832m, down from \$978m.

The US paper industry has

been suffering from a sharp cyclical downturn for the past two years, but analysts have been forecasting a modest recovery during 1992.

However, another leading manufacturer, Georgia-Pacific, depressed Wall Street expectations last week when it announced it would only make a small second-quarter profit.

Boise Cascade said the operating performance of its paper and paper products division in the second quarter continued to be severely affected by weak paper prices, which were on average modestly below the very low levels reached in the first quarter.

Results compared unfavourably with a year ago.

Prices for business and printing papers and market pulp

strengthened modestly in the second quarter, relative to the first quarter, but newsprint, coated and uncoated groundwood paper prices reached new lows in the cycle.

The group's office products segment, hit by the weak US economy, saw profits down from a year ago on slightly higher sales volume. The dip was attributed to a seasonal swing from the first quarter, pressure on margins and the divestiture of the wholesale office products distribution operations.

Building products saw income modestly stronger than the second quarter of last year but down on the first quarter of this year. Lumber prices rose to record levels in the first quarter but have moderated since then.

## Strike hits Kroger second period

By Nikki Tait in New York

KROGER, the US food retailer which took on a heavy debt load when it conducted a defensive restructuring in 1988, yesterday reported an after-tax loss of \$28.4m for the three months to June 13.

This compares with a \$30.6m profit in the same period a year earlier.

Earnings before interest, tax and depreciation – the company's operating cash-flow – were also down sharply, at \$184.4m, compared with \$238.5m for the same period of 1991. Interest charges fell from \$123.7m to \$110m.

Kroger's poor results are partly due to a strike by clerks and meat-cutters in the Michigan region. However, the figures also underline the extremely tough competitive conditions faced by many supermarket groups in the US at present.

Mr Joseph Pitcher, chairman, said the 67-day stoppage in Michigan explained virtually all the decline in second-quarter cash-flow.

He added: "Clearly, the slow pace of economic recovery had not yet restored the confidence of consumers who continue to track household spending on consumable items."

## Westinghouse Electric income slips

By Martin Dickson

WESTINGHOUSE Electric, the US conglomerate, yesterday reported a slight drop in second-quarter net income as a weak US economy battered many of its sectors and its troubled financial services operation suffered a substantial dip in profits.

Westinghouse reported net income of \$122m, or 85 cents a share, on revenue of \$3.15bn, compared with net income of

\$127m, or 41 cents a share, on revenues of \$3.17bn in the same period of last year.

The financial services operation, Westinghouse Credit Corporation, which is being sharply reduced after making some disastrous property investments, reported net income of \$2.1m on revenues of \$172.2m, compared with profits of \$19.5m on revenues of \$264m in the same period of last year.

Westinghouse Electric's operating profit for the period

## Coca-Cola improves 20.4% to \$581m

By Nikki Tait

COCA-COLA, the Atlanta-based soft drinks group, yesterday reported a 20.4 per cent improvement in second-quarter profits after tax, at \$581m.

Earnings per share improved by a slightly larger 22 per cent, to 44 cents, compared with 36 cents a year ago.

Sales during the second quarter reached \$3.55bn, up 16.8 per cent over the same period in 1991.

Coca-Cola said that unit case sales in its domestic market fell by 1 per cent, and gallon sales of concentrated and syrups by 2.5 per cent, as stocks were run down.

However, in Europe warm weather and heavy marketing lifted second-quarter unit sales by 14 per cent year-on-year. This included gains of 25 per cent in France, 17 per cent in Britain and 12 per cent each in Germany and Italy.

Coca-Cola said worldwide soft drink volume continued to advance in the second quarter, with international unit case sales increasing 4 per cent and gallon sales advancing 3 per cent despite softness in the high volume markets of Brazil and Mexico.

First-half net income advanced to \$964.1m from \$693.3m in the previous year on sales which rose to \$6.3bn from \$5.5bn. Earnings per share for the period were lifted to 73 cents from 60 cents.

## Earnings up 46.7% at First Fidelity

By Alan Friedman  
in New York

The recent cut in US interest rates, however, is expected to boost Smith Barney's business as investors switch into stocks from lower-yielding short-term instruments such as bank certificates of deposit and money market funds.

At Primerica's consumer finance services operations, earnings were 10 per cent higher than in 1991 at \$47.5m, but virtually flat compared with the January-to-March period. Similarly, insurance services were little changed on the first quarter at \$45.5m but

slightly higher than a year ago.

Primerica's figures were warmly received on the New York Stock Exchange, where the group's share price rose 31% to 40% in active trading.

• The Federal Reserve Board approved a proposal by BankAmerica Corp of San Francisco to indirectly acquire HonFed Bank of Honolulu and some of its non-banking subsidiaries.

Reuter reports from Washington.

H.F. Holdings is the third largest deposit-taking institution in Hawaii.

This notice appears as a matter of record only.

## Britannia Building Society

£60,000,000

## 13 per cent. Undated Mandatorily Convertible Subordinated Notes ("Notes") convertible into

## 13 per cent. Permanent Interest Bearing Shares ("PIBS")

In accordance with the conditions of the Notes, the Notes will mandatorily convert into the PIBS on 1st August, 1992. Official dealings in the PIBS commence on 3rd August, 1992.

## HOARE GOVETT

## Hoare Govett Corporate Finance Limited

This notice appears as a matter of record only.

## SKIPTON

£25,000,000

## 12% per cent. Undated Mandatorily Convertible Subordinated Notes ("Notes") convertible into

## 12% per cent. Permanent Interest Bearing Shares ("PIBS")

In accordance with the conditions of the Notes, the Notes will mandatorily convert into the PIBS on 1st August, 1992. Official dealings in the PIBS commence on 3rd August, 1992.

## HOARE GOVETT

## Hoare Govett Corporate Finance Limited

This notice appears as a matter of record only.

## LEEDS &amp; HOLBECK BUILDING SOCIETY

£25,000,000

## 13% per cent. Undated Mandatorily Convertible Subordinated Notes ("Notes") convertible into

## 13% per cent. Permanent Interest Bearing Shares ("PIBS")

In accordance with the conditions of the Notes, the Notes will mandatorily convert into the PIBS on 1st August, 1992. Official dealings in the PIBS commence on 3rd August, 1992.

## HOARE GOVETT

## Hoare Govett Corporate Finance Limited

This announcement appears as a matter of record only.

June, 1992



## SUNEL TICARET T.A.S.

U.S. \$25,000,000

## Tobacco Export Finance Facility

Funds Provided by

Bankers Trust Company Internationale Nederlanden Bank N.V.  
London Branch London BranchSociété Générale  
Istanbul BranchUnited Overseas Bank S.A.  
GenevaEgebank A.S.  
Turkish AgentBankers Trust Company  
Arranger and Agent

## Notice of Redemption



## Mortgage Funding Corporation No.4 PLC

(incorporated in England and Wales with limited liability under registered number 213465)

US\$46,700,000

Par floating rate notes due 2009

US\$42,150,000

Discount floating rate notes due 2035

For the period 15 July, 1992 to 15 January, 1993 the notes will bear interest as follows:

Par Notes 2.70% per annum.

Interest payable on 15 January, 1993 until amount:

US\$69.00 per US\$5,000 Note

US\$1.38 per US\$10,000 Note

US\$1,380.00 per US\$100,000 Note

Discount Notes 4.5% per annum.

Interest payable on 15 January, 1993 until amount:

US\$15.00 per US\$5,000 Note

US\$230.00 per US\$10,000 Note

US\$2,300.00 per US\$100,000 Note

Agent: Morgan Guaranty Trust Company

JPMorgan

## SATQUOTE

REAL-TIME EUROPEAN AND US STOCK MARKET DATA AND ANALYSIS AT REALISTIC PRICES  
\* ALSO FUTURES \* OPTIONS \* BONDS \* FX AND NEWS \* CALL - LONDON 71-329-3377 - FRANKFURT 49-69-639125

New Issue

All of these securities having been sold, this announcement appears as a matter of record only.

9,200,000 Shares



## Rexnord Corporation

## Common Stock

1,600,000 Shares

The above shares were offered outside the United States and Canada by the undersigned.

Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette  
Securities Corporation

ABN Amro Bank N.V.

Daiwa Europe Limited

Paribas Capital Markets Group

Bear, Stearns International Limited

Banque Indosuez

Cazenove &amp; Co.

NM Rothschild &amp; Sons Limited

Swiss Bank Corporation

S.G. Warburg Securities

7,600,000 Shares

The above shares were offered in the United States and Canada by the undersigned.

Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette  
Securities CorporationAlex. Brown & Sons  
Incorporated

A.G. Edwards &amp; Sons, Inc.

Lazard Frères &amp; Co.

J.P. Morgan Securities Inc.

Paribas Capital Markets Group

Robertson, Stephens &amp; Company

Smith Barney, Harris Upham & Co.  
Incorporated

Dean Witter Reynolds Inc.

Advest, Inc.

Arnhold and S. Bleichroeder, Inc.

Brean Murray, Foster Securities Inc.

Dain Bosworth  
IncorporatedInterstate/Johnson Lane  
Corporation

Kemper Securities, Inc.

Legg Mason Wood Walker  
Incorporated

Neuberger &amp; Berman

Rauscher Pierce Refsnes, Inc.

The Robinson-Humphrey Company, Inc.

Stephens Inc.

The First Boston Corporation

Hambrecht & Quist  
Incorporated

Lehman Brothers

Morgan Stanley & Co.  
Incorporated

Prudential Securities Incorporated

Salomon Brothers Inc.

Wertheim Schroder & Co.  
IncorporatedRobert W. Baird & Co.  
Incorporated

William Blair &amp; Company

Cowen &amp; Company

First Albany Corporation

Janney Montgomery Scott Inc.

Ladenburg, Thalmann &amp; Co. Inc.

McDonald & Company  
Securities, Inc.

The Ohio Company

Rauscher Pierce Refsnes, Inc.

Tucker Anthony  
Incorporated

Dillon, Read &amp; Co. Inc.

Kidder, Peabody & Co.  
Incorporated

Montgomery Securities

PaineWebber Incorporated

Prudential Securities Incorporated

Salomon Brothers Inc.

Wertheim Schroder & Co.  
IncorporatedRobert W. Baird & Co.  
Incorporated

William Blair &amp; Company

Cowen &amp; Company

First of Michigan Corporation

Johnston, Lemon & Co.  
Incorporated

C.J. Lawrence Inc.

Morgan Keegan &amp; Company, Inc.

Pennsylvania Merchant Group Ltd

Raymond James &amp; Associates, Inc.

Rothschild Inc.

Wheat First Butcher & Singer  
Capital MarketsTHE FIRST MEXICO INCOME FUND N.V.  
Incorporated in the Netherlands Antilles

## NOTICE OF DIVIDEND

Shareholders are informed of a dividend of US\$1.05 share to holders of record as of June 30, 1992.

The dividend will be payable as from July 15, 1992. Payment of the dividend on the bearer shares will be made against surrender of coupon nr. 8 detached from the share certificates, which for this purpose shall be lodged at:

Pierson, Heldring & Pierson N.V.  
Rokin 55, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

which acts as Paying Agent on behalf of the undersigned.

Pierson Trust (Curaçao) N.V.

## VENTURE CAPITAL

The FT proposes to publish this survey on September 25 1992. If you would like to reach the Financial Times audience, which includes the highest readership in Europe of senior business executives within finance and accounting\*, please contact:

Richard Huggins  
Tel: 071-873 3688  
Fax: 071-873 3078

Data source: European Business Readership Survey 1991

FT SURVEYS

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Tel: 90 1 2792648 / 2795350 or Fax: 90 1 2641761 or alternatively  
Mrs Connie Davis in London on  
Tel: 071-873 3514 or Fax: 071-873 3428

FINANCIAL TIMES  
EUROPE'S BUSINESS NEWSPAPER

## INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES AND FINANCE

## A corporate marriage made to last

Steven Butler looks at the durability of the AMD-Fujitsu production venture

WHEN a minnow marries a whale, one can only wonder how long the whale will wait before it swallows his mate.

The alliance agreed this week between Fujitsu, Japan's biggest computer company with \$26.9bn in sales last year, and Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), ranking only fifth among America's semiconductor makers with sales of \$1.2bn, raises that question.

However, Mr W. J. Sanders, chairman of AMD, has structured a deal that could just withstand strains within the partnership and make the marriage last.

Not only have Fujitsu and AMD agreed to jointly build a \$700m factory to manufacture flash memory devices, one of the hottest products in the electronics industry, they have also agreed to buy small equity stakes in each other.

While cross-shareholdings are normal practice in Japan among closely-associated companies, this is a first in trans-Pacific technology alliances and represents a tangible commitment to a long-term partnership.

Fujitsu and AMD will establish a 50-50 joint venture company that will build the factory to make flash memory chips. These retain information, just like a disc drive or tape recorder, when power is switched off, and can also perform data processing tasks. Datquest, the research company, expects the market for these devices to expand from about \$150m a year to \$1.5bn in 1995. Many in the industry expect a market big

ger than \$5bn by the end of the decade.

AMD and Fujitsu hope to establish a leading position quickly. The factory will open in late 1994 and have a capacity of 20,000 eight-inch silicon wafers a month. The two companies hope this will give them more than 20 per cent of the

world market - an ambitious

goal that requires a large financial commitment and close co-operation.

The venture covers only the most advanced devices - using circuitry of 0.5 micron (a millionth of a metre) width or smaller. The agreement, however, also forbids either partner from producing these devices outside the joint venture, effectively preventing them from competing against each other.

This pact is a conscious attempt by the two companies to avoid the pitfalls that have struck many US-Japanese technology alliances. US companies have been accused of providing basic technology on the cheap to Japanese companies.

While the agreement is the third in a series of cross-border alliances in flash memory

advanced flash chips in Japan, IBM and Toshiba last month agreed to share technology to develop a proprietary flash technology owned by Toshiba, which invented the devices in 1984.

AMD has flash technology, but needs

a big partner to shoulder the financial burden and the large market risks.

Fujitsu needs the technology and, with around \$8bn in consolidated net debt at the end of March, it could use a partner to share the costs.

These are still to be negotiated, but Fujitsu is likely to own a much bigger stake in AMD than vice-versa.

"This collaboration is based on a spirit of equal partnership and co-operation," Mr Hikarou Masunaga, Fujitsu managing director, said.

Equal or not, the deal is a marriage rich in convenience. AMD has flash technology, but needs a big partner to shoulder the financial burden and the large market risks. Fujitsu needs the technology and, with around \$8bn in consolidated net debt at the end of March - after a fiscal year when it was battered by weak semiconductor markets - it could use a partner to share the costs.

The two companies also stressed the complimentary nature of their technologies, leaving plenty of scope for further co-operation. Still, it would be difficult to imagine such a deal being struck until the costs.

Mr Sanders cited three reasons why. First, the cost of capital in Japan was so cheap until recently that Japanese companies did not need partners - now they are paying world rates or more.

Second, the costs of developing new technology and building plants has also risen sharply. Third, Japanese companies are paying more attention to profitability than before, and it is easier to agree on an expected margin of return. "This produces an environment in which enlightened companies can join together for their mutual benefit," said Mr Sanders.

## Federal Express delivers \$113.8m loss

By Nikki Tait in New York

FEDERAL EXPRESS, the largest overnight package delivery business in the US, suffered a \$113.8m loss after tax in the year to end-May.

The loss was scored on revenues down from \$7.68bn a year earlier to \$7.55bn. FedEx, which has been incurring heavy losses from its international operations recently, made a small \$5.8m profit after tax in 1990-91.

However, in the previous year it reported a \$116.8m surplus after tax, and \$184.8m in 1989-90.

In the fourth quarter of

1991-92, FedEx said the overall after-tax profit totalled \$38.8m, up from \$31m in the same period a year earlier.

But its international business remained in the red - although the operating loss from this division fell to \$63.2m, on revenues of \$33.1m, against a deficit of \$74.6m on revenues of \$33.5m a year earlier.

In March, FedEx announced a withdrawal from the highly-competitive European delivery industry, sub-contracting all its intra-European delivery business and laying off more than 6,000 employees.

This move, according to Fed-

eral, has succeeded in removing more fixed costs than revenue, thus aiding profitability.

Express package volumes to and from Europe had been maintained at levels "ahead of expectations".

Mr Fred Smith, FedEx's founder and chairman, warned that further improvement would "require a continuation of growth in international express package volumes and higher profit ability from international air freight business".

For 1991-92 overall, the loss from the Memphis-based company's international operations totalled \$612.9m, compared

with a \$219.1m deficit in the previous 12 months.

The former figure, however, was scored after \$254m of restructuring charges, largely to cover the withdrawal from Europe. The 1990-91 loss came after charges of \$121m.

On the domestic front, where

Federal Express carries about half the nation's overnight express packages, FedEx said the climate remained extremely price-competitive.

Despite this, Federal managed an operating profit margin of 12.2 per cent, which it attributed to productivity gains and cost improvements.

## Glut squeezes margins at Alcan

By Bernard Simon in Toronto

EXCESS aluminium supplies squeezed Alcan's margins in the second quarter this year, contributing to a deeper loss for the period.

The Montreal-based aluminium producer also painted a sombre picture of its near-term prospects. "With considerable new capacity being added to the industry this year, it is difficult to see much relief for prices," Mr David Morton, chairman, said.

The net second-quarter loss was US\$27m, or 14 cents a

share, up from \$6m, or 4 cents a share, a year earlier. The six-month loss also widened to \$40m, or 22 cents, from \$26m, or 7 cents.

The second-quarter figure includes a \$9m after-tax charge, equal to 4 cents a share, for cost-reduction programmes. Similar charges of \$17m, or 9 cents, were taken a year earlier. Revenues slipped fractionally to just under \$2bn.

Mr Morton said an improvement in North America, Germany and France compared with the previous three months was offset by poor

results from Japan, partly due to the weak performance of Nippon Light Metal Company.

Alcan shipped 181,000 tonnes of ingots in the second quarter, down from 219,000 a year earlier. Deliveries of fabricated products rose to 380,000 tonnes from 363,000 tonnes.

The average ingot price dropped by \$88 per tonne to \$1,431, but Alcan said its average production costs had fallen by more than \$100 per tonne in the past year.

During 1991, Alcan laid off about 4,000 employees worldwide.

## Marubeni buys 10% of smelter

MARUBENI of Japan has bought a 10 per cent stake in Portland Aluminium Smelter from the Victoria state government of Australia, AP reports from Melbourne.

Portland Smelter is majority-owned by Alcan of Australia, a 51 per cent-owned subsidiary of Aluminum Company of America, with 45 per cent. The Victorian government retains a 25 per cent stake in the smelter following its sale of 10 per cent.

Marubeni will pay \$171m (US\$127.6m) for the stake, to be used by government agency, Aluvic, to retire debt. A stamp duty charge of \$2.6m will lift the cost to \$181.9m.

Victoria state has been hard hit by recession, being forced to sell assets including State Bank of Victoria, and a stake in its Loy Yang B power station. It is now selling the State Insurance Office.

## NEC, Motorola in telecom deal

JAP

## INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL MARKETS

## Gilts recover modestly as pound improves

By Richard Waters

THE prospect of a tightening in German monetary policy continued to hang heavy on European bond markets yesterday as investors dug in for the long wait until the Bundes-

## GOVERNMENT BONDS

bank meeting tomorrow.

UK government bonds, which had slipped on Monday as sterling caught a bad case of the jitters over Germany, recovered some of their composure, along with the currency. Prices of longer-dated gilts moved to reflect continued signs of weakness in the UK economy and falling inflation, despite the trepidation caused by tough signals from the Bundesbank.

UK manufacturing output figures confirmed the recent trend, with output for May down 0.6 per cent and a provisional April rise of 0.1 per cent revised to a fall of 0.3 per cent. Investors preferred to take

note of these figures rather than the latest producer prices, which showed an unexpected jump.

The benchmark 9 per cent gilts due 2000 picked up nearly half a point to 101.14, for a yield of 8.8 per cent, while the yield on partly-paid 9 per cent gilts due 2012 fell to 8.77 per cent, a price of 376.

On Liffe, the short sterling contract ended the day near its Monday close, having sliced on the fears from Germany.

IN Germany, bonds firmed on the day as conditions in the money market remained tight ahead of the Bundesbank meeting.

In a moderately active day on Liffe, the bond futures contract advanced from 87.62 to 87.76 as traders reacted to the feeling that Monday's sell-off had been overdone. However, the market remained generally apprehensive - despite some suggestions that the bond market could actually advance on the back of any monetary tightening, taking it as an encouraging reaffirmation of

the Bundesbank's determination to beat inflation.

The OECD, in its latest annual report on the German economy, added its voice to those calling for moderation in Bundesbank policy when it said: "A temporary above-target monetary expansion would not seem to call for further tightening in monetary conditions."

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## BENCHMARK GOVERNMENT BONDS

	Coupon	Red Date	Price	Change	Yield	Week ago	Month ago
AUSTRALIA	10.000	10/02	107.3418	+0.128	8.67	8.65	8.65
BELGIUM	9.000	06/01	105.7000	+0.100	8.58	8.78	8.89
CANADA	8.500	04/02	104.1500	-	7.89	7.84	8.15
DENMARK	8.000	11/00	99.4000	-	9.09	8.99	8.99
FRANCE STAN	8.500	03/97	97.7100	+0.100	9.10	9.04	9.04
CAT	8.500	11/02	97.9000	+0.100	8.79	8.71	8.75
GERMANY	8.000	01/02	99.7800	+0.145	8.02	7.85	7.90
ITALY	12.000	05/02	94.5300	-0.180	13.427	13.38	13.19
JAPAN	4.800	06/89	97.0045	+0.007	5.37	5.41	5.72
No 129	6.400	03/93	105.7500	-0.181	8.17	8.18	8.48
NETHERLANDS	8.250	02/02	99.4800	+0.250	8.31	8.27	8.28
UK GILTS	11.300	01/02	97.6300	-0.376	11.60	11.61	11.65
10.000	11/95	102.87	+0.032	9.23	9.05	9.17	9.17
9.000	01/98	101.17	+0.020	9.04	8.95	9.03	9.01
US TREASURY	7.500	05/02	101.8000	-0.125	9.05	9.01	9.07
8.000	11/21	103.1800	-0.025	7.98	7.81	7.83	7.83
ECU French Govt	8.500	03/92	95.7000	-0.009	9.01	8.98	8.98

London closing: New York closing Yield: Local market standard

Gross annual yield (including withholding tax at 12.5 per cent payable by non-resident)

Prices US, UK in 2ndnds, others in decimal

Technical Data ATLAS Price Sources

7.688 per cent. The two-year note, however, was firmer, up 1/16 to carry a yield of 4.277 per cent.

The yield curve has been steepening lately as investors buy short-dated paper over the longer-term securities, their demand spurred by faint hopes

that the Federal Reserve may ease monetary policy again and by concern that President George Bush could lose the election in November.

At times of political uncertainty, short-term securities are always favoured as the safe haven of choice.

## Ryoko Securities to pull out of Switzerland

By Simon London

RYOKO Securities, which is 33 per cent owned by the Mitsubishi Bank group, is to pull out of Switzerland, Reuters reports from Tokyo.

The Tokyo-based brokerage will return Ryoko Securities' Swiss licence on July 20. The move stems from shrinking primary and brokerage business in Switzerland, and to ensure help in underpinning cost-cutting in Japan.

• Three Japanese second-tier securities companies paid 79.8bn to compensate clients' losses from securities trading during the two years to March 1992, according to the Finance Ministry.

The Tokyo Stock Exchange fined Dai-ichi Securities, New Japan Securities and Kankaku Securities Yen 2 each. Four officials at the three companies have resigned and 21 had their salaries cut.

The moves are part of last summer's compensation scandal which hit the Japanese securities industry. It centred on unethical practices.

## Matsushita launches \$1bn global issue

By Simon London

MATSUSHITA Electric Industrial, the giant Japanese consumer electronics group, waited until late afternoon in London yesterday before

of its six global bond issues, the appetite of Euromarket investors for registered, corporate paper remains high.

The late launch suggested the issue was targeted towards US investors. Syndicate officials said yield spreads in the US market were tighter than in the Euromarket, and demand from North America was seen as crucial to underpin the deal.

The syndication contained several features unusual in Eurobond issues, including a \$300m "pot" of bonds from which underwriters can obtain additional paper for clients.

• The poor performance of the Tokyo stock market this year has made it impossible to raise equity-linked funding on any scale. Moreover, Japanese banks are less willing to issue to the purchase of MCA, the US entertainment group. Matsushita is the second Japanese company to launch a \$1bn Eurodollar issue to refinance its debt to meet capital-to-assets targets set by the Bank of Japan.

However, bankers said yesterday that Matsushita was one of only a handful of corporations able to raise debt finance from the bond markets on this scale.

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## COMPANY NEWS: UK

## Automotive side limits Triplex Lloyd's decline

By Paul Cheeswright,  
Midlands Correspondent

PRE-TAX PROFITS at Triplex Lloyd slipped 7 per cent in the 12 months to end-March as the industrial engineering group fought the weakness of the building products market.

However, a strong performance by its automotive and engineering and power divisions restricted the decline at the pre-tax line to £7.07m (£7.57m).

The group incurred an attributable loss of £2.59m after extraordinary items of £3.09m to cover the write-off of loss-making Canadian operations and a transfer to reserves of £4.85m for goodwill related to those operations. There was a profit last time of £5.3m.

The strength of the performance in the automotive and

power divisions led to an increase of 18 per cent to £10.3m (£8.7m) in operating profits. The rise came largely because of an improvement in margins, from 6.5 per cent to 7.8 per cent in automotive and from 5.8 per cent to 7.4 per cent in power.

Earnings per share were 11.4p, down from 12.7p. The recommended final dividend is unchanged at 4.5p, bringing the total, for the third successive year, to 7p.

Although the group expects little over the coming year from its building products division, "automotive and engineering and power divisions are well positioned to sustain and indeed improve their profitability even if UK economic activity should remain depressed," said Mr Colin Cooke, chairman.

Thames wins £29m ITV deal

By Raymond Snoddy

THAMES Television yesterday announced it had won a larger than expected £29m programme deal with ITV for the first eight months of next year.

The deal includes a third-weekly half hour edition of *The Bill*, its police drama series. These account for more than half the value of the programme package which will launch Thames as an independent producer.

The group lost its licence to Carlton Television in last year's competitive tenders and ceases to be a broadcaster at the end of this year.

It said yesterday that the deal had been blocked for a time by Carlton which did not want past episodes of *The Bill* to be available for UK Gold, the new Thames-BEC satellite channel.

The channel, to be launched in the autumn, will concentrate on library programmes. Thames had to threaten that *The Bill* would not be available to ITV next year before a deal was agreed.

The £29m deal over 8 months compares with the £70m-280m worth of programmes Thames now sells to the network in a full year. It has lost its current affairs programmes such as *This Week*, daytime programmes and most of its comedy programmes.

Apart from *The Bill* the package covers a new series of *Minder*, *This Is Your Life*, *Wish You Were Here*, *The Best of Tommy Cooper*, *Mr Bean* and *Count Duckula*.

Once the planned new central networking system is in place Thames will begin negotiations for the supply of programmes to ITV beyond August 1993.

By Richard Gourlay

EUROTHERM, the control equipment group, yesterday reported a 47 per cent rise in interim profits after a substantial pruning of its workforce and overheads.

The pre-tax line at end-April rose from £4.8m to £6.7m, on sales only 0.8 per cent higher at £78.1m.

Mr Jack Leonard, chairman, said the company had encountered the worst global recession in its 27 year history, and

### COMMENT

Triplex Lloyd is now benefiting from both an investment and acquisition programme and a more concentrated focusing of its business. This is enabling it to pick up business in the automotive sector and exploit a power sector where demand is strong anyway. Exposure to the UK market is being reduced. There is no reason why this incipient strength should not be more apparent over the current year. Arguably then, the share price, latterly languishing around its 1992 low, looks cheap compared with some of its peers. In the expectation of higher profits this year – possibly about £9.5m, to give earnings of 12.5p – the prospective multiple at 13p is under 11, against an actual sector average of over 25.



Trevor Humphries  
Power in his hands: Colin Cooke with a section of a gas turbine vane, one of Triplex's precision castings

## Eurotherm shows 47% advance to £6.7m

By Richard Gourlay

there was no sign of any improvement at the moment. The company had misjudged the extent of the economic downturn and had entered the recession with too many overheads, he said.

During the first half, however, overheads had been cut by 25m and in the last 18 months 400, mainly white collar, employees had been shed, reducing the workforce to about 2,300 worldwide.

"We spent the last nine months getting the house in

order," Mr Leonard said. "Now we have to increase sales."

While many of the group's markets were in trouble, the water and electricity companies were flush with cash and a potential market, and the food sector was maintaining demand in the packaging industry.

Gearing fell from 30 per cent to 25 per cent and the company said cash flow would remain positive until the end of the year.

Earnings per share rose from

## Sterling Publishing recovers to £2.05m

By Peggy Hollinger

STERLING Publishing Group, owner of Debutte Peageer, appears to be recovering from untimely expansion in 1990 with the announcement of £2.05m in annual pre-tax profits, buoyed by a loss of £1.04m.

Mr Michael Preston, deputy chairman, was bullish about the current year, saying he would be disappointed if the company did not surpass 1990 profits of £4.4m. "Advertising is showing a very healthy increase. The current year is looking very good indeed."

Mr Preston said the group had increased advertising revenue by 40 per cent in the year just ended, due to concentrating on more internationally marketable publications.

Turnover for the year to March 31 slipped to £151m (£162.2m) due to lower prices and a fall off in North American sales.

Poor demand for industrial shipping sacks led to a pre-interest loss of £239,000 for the US packaging division, compared to a £311,000 profit a year ago.

But European profits increased 20 per cent to £11m, despite difficult markets. Margins improved from 9 per cent to 10.8 per cent and the UK plastics division turned from a loss to a small profit.

Profits before interest increased 5.6 per cent to

£1.1m. Interest charges rose slightly to £1.24m (£1.1m), partly caused by the acquisition in May of a Dutch floor-covering company.

Earnings increased 6.7 per cent to 9.39p and the interim dividend was a same-as-gain 2.7p.

The shares gained 4p to 28p.

### COMMENT

After falling out of favour for 18 months, Low & Bonar is finding its way back onto brokers' buy lists. The company's investment programme is starting to show fruit in terms of improved productivity. As the programme winds down, Low & Bonar's capital expenditure to depreciation ratio is set to fall from 2 times in 1990 to about 1.5 this year. The market also likes the look of the new management. The one question mark hangs over US packaging, which will remain a loss-maker this year and will only really turn round when customers in the industrial and construction sectors see an improvement.

The shares like the rest of the sector, have already responded to a small profit for the full year of £26m put Low & Bonar on a multiple of 13.7, which is not demanding.

## European sales rise helps Low & Bonar improve to £11.8m

By Angus Foster

LOW & BONAR, the Dundee-based packaging and plastic company, yesterday announced a slight increase in interim profits, buoyed by a loss of £1.04m.

Mr Michael Preston, deputy chairman, was bullish about the current year, saying he would be disappointed if the company did not surpass 1990 profits of £4.4m.

At the pre-tax level they rose by 4.9 per cent to £1.24m.

Mr Jim Lang, who is being promoted later this year from chief executive, Europe, to group chief executive, said the performance was due to improved productivity and better margins, stemming from cost cutting.

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## Etonbrook Properties in dispute over restructuring

By Peggy Hollinger

ETONBROOK Properties, the former Business Expansion Scheme company which came to the market last year, yesterday launched a sharp attack on one of its shareholders as it prepared for an acrimonious extraordinary meeting next month.

Costs of reorganisation and disposals made after the year-end of £5.34m (£1.56m) were taken as an extraordinary item. A further £4.57m (£1.62m) charge arose from the accounting requirement that goodwill previously written off be taken in the profit and loss account upon disposal.

The loss attributable to shareholders was almost doubled to 28.03m (£4.14m).

Fully-diluted earnings per share were 6.39p, although on a continuing basis they were 6.19p, compared with losses of 5.56p. The proposed final dividend is raised to 3p (1p), for a maintained total of 2.5p.

Since the group has no distributable reserves, Mr Harris wants to restructure the share capital to provide the money to pay preference and ordinary dividends. Etonbrook has already set aside the £1.2m necessary to redeem the shares. The restructuring will be put to the vote at the EGM on August 7.

Multitrust has been campaigning against the board's strategy, but Mr Andrew Paton, chairman, was unavailable for comment yesterday.

## British Bio in deal with Glaxo

By Paul Abrahams

BRITISH Bio-technology, the recently floated group, has signed a collaborative agreement with Glaxo to develop a new asthma compound.

Glaxo is paying about £1m for pre-clinical development and will conduct and pay for clinical trials scheduled to begin during the third quarter of this year.

Although final terms have not been agreed, Glaxo is

expected to manufacture and market the drug worldwide and it is licensed.

The medicine, known as BB-882, will be given in oral doses.

British Bio-technology is also planning to develop an injectable version of BB-882 for the acute shock. The Oxford-based company will conduct the early trials, and if successful, may conclude a further agreement with Glaxo.

Mr James Noble, finance

## Lloyds Chemists to buy further 87 outlets

By Angus Foster

LLOYDS Chemists, the acquisitive retailer which in March took control of rival McCarthy, is buying up to 87 outlets from the receivers of Cavendish and Castle, the greatest card retailing chain.

Financial details of the purchase have not been released but the price is understood to be less than £4m. The sites, presently tobacco and green-grocery card outlets, are located throughout the UK and are mainly held on short term leases. They will be converted into outlets for Lloyds' Holland & Barrett healthfood chain and Superdrug stores.

## Trust of Property net assets decline

Net asset value per share of Trust of Property Shares stood at 69.02p at June 30. That compared with 77.31p a year earlier and 78.43p at the December 1991 year-end.

Losses were 5.91p (earnings 5.36p). Lower extraordinary costs of £23,000 (£20,000) left retained losses of £270,000 (£288,000).

The loss was after exceptional redundancy charges of

£111,000 and interest costs of £188,000 (£181,000).

The interim dividend is passed – 0.9p was paid previously.

Mr Peter Denner, chairman, said the company had managed to avoid the worst effects of recession over the past two years. He added, however, that it had taken its toll in the second half.

Turnover for the six months to May 31 fell 19 per cent to £2.17m for a loss of 2471,000, compared with a profit of £552,000.

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## Contract failure knocks Birse to loss of £13.2m

By Andrew Taylor,  
Construction Correspondent

**BIRSE GROUP**, the building and civil engineering company which Bilfinger & Berger, the German contractor, has a 15 per cent stake, incurred a loss of £13.2m during the year to end-April.

The deficit compared with a pre-tax profit of £10m the previous year, and was struck on turnover up from £317m to £366m.

Losses per share were 16.6p compared with earnings of 7.8p last time.

Following a same-again interim of 1.65p, the group is proposing not to pay a final dividend.

The result had been widely expected and the company's share price yesterday remained unchanged at 23p. This compares with a price of 120p when Birse was floated and Bilfinger acquired its strategic holding in the autumn of 1989.

Losses included exceptional charges of £13.1m. Of these, £3.5m arose from the failure earlier this year of Quietwaters, a private developer which owed substantial sums to Birse for the construction of a golf course, hotel and leisure complex in Essex.

Mr Peter Birse, chairman, said another £3.5m of losses arising from the collapse of Quietwaters had been deducted from operating profits, which fell from £13.6m to £4.5m.

The remaining £4.3m of provisions, he said, came from write-downs of the group's residential and commercial property interests.

Mr Birse said the group's order book now showed a good mix of business. More than 80

per cent of contracts were either with public sector customers or secure large private water companies.

Construction profits excluding provisions fell from £12m to £3.4m. Housing incurred a £600,000 operating loss (£700,000 loss) and remained a difficult market. Commercial property made an operating profit of £600,000 (£100,000 before write-downs of £3.7m).

### COMMENT

Questions have been raised in recent weeks about Birse's ability to survive the sharp downturn in the UK construction market, illustrated so savagely by the collapse of the Quietwaters contract. The group, which has been very aggressive in bidding for work in recent years, took pains yesterday to underline the security of its order book, particularly in northern England where it says average margins remain between 1 per cent and 2 per cent. In southern England contracts are lucky if they do more than cover overheads, according to Mr Birse. Gearing of 9.2 per cent on net debt of £24.9m may be uncomfortable but is not life threatening and is an improvement on the previous year. Judging by comments from analysts, the group convinced the market yesterday that speculation about its future had been misplaced. Nonetheless it should do little better than break-even in the current period and the share price, given the problems in the sector, will struggle to improve much. Bilfinger - which has still to win a contract in joint venture with Birse - must be feeling a little sick.

**RECESSION** leaves Bucknall £2m in red

By Andrew Taylor

**BUCKNALL GROUP**, the only quoted firm of quantity surveyors, was hit hard by the effects of the recession in the construction industry and ran up a loss of £1.32m pre-tax for the year to end-April.

That compared with profits of £1.3m in the previous 12 months.

The dividend for the year is omitted - shareholders received a 4.8p total previously. Losses per share of 10p compared with earnings of 10p in 1990-91.

Mr David Bucknall, chairman and chief executive, said the directors had taken an average pay cut of 22 per cent while salaries of subsidiary company directors and senior managers had been reduced by 10 per cent.

This had helped generate savings of more than £1.7m a year.

Group turnover fell by 17 per cent to £17.3m. Mr Bucknall said that UK turnover, down by 30 per cent, had fallen faster than the group could cut costs and this had led to losses.

Overseas turnover, on the other hand, had risen by 88 per cent to £4.5m.

The group had also been successful recently in winning other types of work away from the private office market which had borne the brunt of the recession, in the UK.

Pre-tax losses for 1991-92 were struck after taking account of exceptional provisions of £28.6m, (£24.7m) mostly due to redundancy costs. The group's UK staff during the latest 12 months had been reduced from 418 to 367.

Year-end gearing of 7.5 per cent compared with 12.3 per cent 12 months earlier.

## Future of Amps questioned as BET redeems

Credit rating is key to success of hybrid issues, reports Maggie Urry

**B**ET'S decision to redeem its £500m (£262m) auction market preferred stock again raises the question of the role of these US-traded instruments in companies' financing structures.

The removal will take away about a quarter of the value of issues from UK borrowers, although the total market is still worth more than \$20bn.

While BET and others, such as English China Clays, Rank Organisation, the leisure group, and Tarmac, the building materials producer, have decided to redeem part or all of their Amps, other companies remain enthusiastic about them. Elf UK, part of Elf Aquitaine, the oil group, which has £250m of Amps outstanding for 72 per cent.

The interest rate on Amps is reset regularly, typically every 28 days, through auctions of the stock. BET's stock is divided into four series with one reset each week.

Bidders set the rate of interest. If not enough buyers are found the previous holders continue to own the stock but are paid a fall-back rate of interest, relating to the company's credit standing. The Amps market is driven by credit ratings.

When a company's rating falls, the interest rate, as a percentage of commercial paper rates, rises sharply.

In January this year Ratners, the jeweller retailer, saw its credit rating cut from BBB to B and the next auction of a tranche of its Amps failed.

When Ratners then stopped paying interest on its Amps, and on other preference shares, the rate was locked at 250 per

US, adding to the range of potential buyers. Its last two auctions achieved interest rates of less than 3 per cent, a little more than 50 per cent of commercial paper rates.

Redland, the building materials group, also pays rates below commercial paper rates. Mr Gerald Corbett, finance director, points out that Redland's latest auction produced an interest rate of 3.2 per cent.

Redland's Amps make up 8 per cent of shareholders' funds while BET's Amps account for 72 per cent.

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cent of commercial paper rates and has been occurring at that level since.

The Ratners experience has proved, though, that Amps behave like equity rather than debt when a company is in difficulties, a point which was debated among issuers, their shareholders and auditors for some time. Eventually the

accounting standards board

came down in favour of Amps being treated as a "non-equity" portion of shareholders' funds.

BET also cited declining investor demand as a reason for redeeming. However, Mr Corbett said Redland had "not seen any signs of a lessening of investor interest".

Market observers note, how-

ever, that the sharp fall in US short-term interest rates has left the dollar yield curve steeply positive. Investors are therefore looking to longer term investments to pick up a higher interest rate rather than the 28-day paper.

One investment banker said: "The size of your audience is crucial to the health of your transaction." Those investors still interested in Amps are wary of all but the best credit risks.

A new market is opening for companies to tap, though. Fixed rate perpetual preference shares have been used by banks but in December last year they were opened to industrial companies by General Motors, the vehicle group, which found such good demand for an issue it was increased from \$300m to \$1bn.

More recently, Enterprise Oil was the first non-US industrial company to tap the market with a \$150m issue which paid interest at 10.5 per cent. Elf UK is planning to make a portion of its \$250m issue, perhaps \$100m, a fixed rate preference share.

When UK companies own assets in the US they need to match them with dollar capital, debt or equity. When one market closes they will look for another. It may be that dollar-denominated perpetual fixed rate preference shares will plug that gap.

Contrasts: Gerald Corbett (left) of Redland which pays 3.2% and Gerald Ratner of Ratners whose auction failed

## GIM launches smaller companies investment trust

By John Authers

**GLASGOW INVESTMENT** Managers is launching a new investment trust which will invest in smaller companies and aim for a high yield.

Despite the problems which have hit the new issues market, including three investment trusts, in the last month, GIM said it had picked its time well.

Mr David Williams, managing director, said: "I don't think our timing could be better. We are confident we're

at the bottom of the cycle and the current weakness of the market offers very real opportunities for growth over the longer term."

The trust, to be called Shires Yielding Smaller Companies, will buy shares in companies with a market capitalisation between £25m and £250m with a minimum dividend yield of 120 per cent of the FT-A All Share index.

The projected initial gross yield will be 7 per cent, and the managers expect

GIM argues that smaller companies outperform UK equities during periods of economic expansion.

The launch of the trust will be aided by Shires, GIM's flagship investment trust, which will transfer smaller companies' shares to the value of £25m from its own portfolio in return for a £25m shareholding in the new trust.

Williams de Broe, sponsor to the

issue, has obtained underwriting for £12.5m, and is aiming for a maximum of £30m. The trust, primarily aimed at the

retail market, will try to attract private investors via personal equity plans.

Warrants will be attached to the ordinary shares on a 1-for-5 basis, but the company has avoided the more complicated capital structures popular with new investment trust issues earlier this year, saying that these could create conflicts of interest between different classes of shareholder.

The formal launch will be on Friday and the trust will remain open to subscriptions until August 20.

## DIVIDENDS ANNOUNCED

	Current payment	Date of payment	Corres - pending	Total for year	Total last year
Aitken Hume Int'l	nil		-	0.5	1.0
Birse	nil		3.85	1.65	5.5
Bucknall	nil		3.5	4.8	4.8
CMW	nil		0.9	-	2.43
Euroltherm	int 3	Oct 14	2.5	-	7.2
Hethon	1.35p		1.35	2	2
Low & Sonar	int 2.7	Oct 5	2.7	-	9.1
Mon Ami	1.75	Sept 7	2.4	4.7	4.7
Multicore Elect	2.5	Oct 1	4.16	3.5	8.6
Nobe	11	Oct 8	1	1	1
Pelican	3.85	Sept 9	3.45	5.45	4.95
Sterling Pub	2	Nov 9	1	2.5	2.5
Triplex Lloyd	4.5	Sept 22	4.5	7	7
Wood (John D)	nil		nil	nil	1.5

Dividends shown pence per share net except where otherwise stated. \*On increased capital. \$USM stock. \$AUSh currency.

## BOARD MEETINGS

	FUTURE DATES		
Interim - Castle Calm Inv Trust, Denmark	Aug 12	July 22	July 23
Interim - Gilmour (H&P), Clarke House, Tadworth, Surrey	July 21	July 24	July 25
Interim - Ratner (H&P), Clarke House, Tadworth, Wrexham, Wales	July 22	July 23	July 24
Today			

## Anglovaal Group

Mining companies' reports - Quarter ended 30 June 1992

### Hartbeestfontein Gold Mining Co Ltd

Reg. No. 000388500

Issued capital: 112 000 000 shares of 10 cents each

Dividend declared

Quarter ended

30 June 1992

31 March 1992

30 June 1992

Financial year ended

30 June 1992

31 March 1992

30 June 1992

Financial year ended

30 June 1992

31 March 1992

30 June 1992

Financial year ended

30 June 1992

31 March 1992

30 June 1992

Financial year ended

30 June 1992

31 March 1992

30 June 1992

Financial year ended

30 June 1992

31 March 1992

30 June 1992

## COMMODITIES AND AGRICULTURE

## Siberian copper deposit to be opened to West

By John Lloyd in Moscow

ONE OF the largest copper deposits in the world – in Siberia – is to be opened up to international tender by the Russian government in the next few weeks.

The project is expected to show a different approach by the Russian government to large international tenders. The government will favour those foreign companies which will join in a consortium with Russian corporations and financial groups and will insist that both equipment and labour is sourced in Russia.

The deposit, at Udogan in the Chita region of Siberia, has been estimated to be capable of producing 500,000 tonnes of copper concentrate a year when fully exploited. It contains around 1.3bn tonnes of concentrate containing 1.5 per cent of copper.

The site was known to the former Soviet government for the past 25 years, but was considered impractical to exploit until the BAM railway, which passes within 50 km (35 miles) of the site, was completed. However, once BAM was finished in the second part of the 1980s, the Soviet government lacked the vast technical and

Bulgaria is to close dozens of unprofitable copper, zinc and lead mines over the next few years, sharply reducing output of the metals, reports Reuter from Sofia.

"The zinc, lead and copper mines, or parts of them, will be closed by stages within three years," said Mr Politini Pansova, a senior industry ministry official.

The industry ministry said that in recent years annual production of copper concentrate in Bulgaria had averaged 150,000 tonnes, lead concentrate 80,000 tonnes and zinc concentrate 70,000 tonnes. However, figures were much lower last year.

The closures are likely to result in output of copper falling to 50,000 tonnes a year, lead to 30,000 tonnes and zinc to 25,000 tonnes, a mining industry official said.

financial resources needed to develop the project.

It is now seen by the Russian government as a future flag-ship project, which will both prove its ability to tender on a grand scale and give Russian companies and managers experience of a world class project.

Mr Alexander Rubtsov, managing director of Ernst and Young Vneshconsult group, which has been retained by the Chita regional authority to advise on the project, said yesterday that the investment required would be between \$1bn and \$2bn. Initial calculations show that some 2,000 workers would be directly employed at the site, with a further 20,000 in various service functions.

Various methods of exploiting the reserves are expected to be proposed, ranging from simple mining and exporting of the ore, through the construction of smelters on site, to the creation of a range of downstream industries to use the copper.

The international companies expected to bid for the project include the UK group RTZ, the US companies Fluor Daniel and Phelps Dodge and the Australian company Broken Hill Proprietary. Japanese companies like Mitsubishi, increasingly active in mineral resources, may also be part of future consortia.

Mr Robin Bhar, an independent mineral consultant, said yesterday that "this is one of the most promising projects in Russia which are ready and willing to act as partners in a consortium and have the resources or can get the resources to work on the international scale.

"There are a lot of businessmen in Russia now who are ready to move from trading, where they made a lot of money, into capital investment in Russia itself. They should now be included as members of international consortia – and Mr Yeltsin and Mr Gaidar

should get some very much needed foreign investment and it would have a big impact on world production."

Mr Rubtsov, a member of the council of business advisers to Mr Boris Yeltsin, the Russian president, said that Mr Yeltsin and Mr Yegor Gaidar, the acting prime minister, had agreed that the tender should lay down that Russian labour and equipment must be used in order to provide experience and to give work to the hard pressed engineering sector.

Mr Rubtsov said that "if we don't begin to do this in international tenders, it will mean that foreign companies get everything and Russians only a fee. There are now companies in Russia which are ready and willing to act as partners in a consortium and have the resources or can get the resources to work on the international scale.

"There are a lot of businessmen in Russia now who are ready to move from trading, where they made a lot of money, into capital investment in Russia itself. They should now be included as members of international consortia – and Mr Yeltsin and Mr Gaidar

should agree with this approach".

• The head of Russia's gold industry has announced his resignation, following a sharp fall in output by 1983 and 1984, the Rossiyskaya Gazeta news paper said, reports Reuter from Moscow.

It quoted Mr Valery Rudin, head of the state monopoly for precious metals and diamonds Rosmazoloto, as calling a meeting of the industry's senior figures that he was resigning because the industry had become unmanageable.

He said shortcomings in the provision of resources would not send extraction platinum this year as most inputs were provided more than a year in advance. But a sharp drop in production was inevitable by 1993 and 1994. He gave no figures.

While Russia's new government had given enterprises more freedom than under Soviet rule, Mr Rudakov said it had been a mistake to keep them under formal state ownership. No one in his industry knew whose orders to obey any more, he said.

"I am a splitter of the command administrative system and I cannot work when there is no accepted hierarchy," Mr Rudakov said.

## Platinum highest for nearly 12 months

By Kenneth Gooding, Mining Correspondent

## PLATINUM PRICES

rose strongly again yesterday to their highest level for nearly a year. Gold followed platinum's lead and broke through the psychologically-important \$350 a troy ounce barrier.

Some analysts suggest platinum's recent performance has been caused by nervousness about the upheavals in South Africa, the world's biggest producer, accounting for more than 85 per cent of supply.

Mr Michael Coulson, analyst at Durlacher and Co, the London stockbroker, pointed out, however, that "most platinum buyers have seen it all before. There has been no sign of panic buying – otherwise platinum and gold prices would be considerably higher."

He suggested that other, non-South African factors were at work in the platinum market. "I get the impression the producers are happy about the medium-term outlook and that they feel the price was forced down too far."

Mr Andy Smith, analyst at the Union Bank of Switzerland, suggested that platinum's price might fall back as the deadline for a general strike in South Africa, for two or three days starting on August 3, passed.

But Mr Neil Carson, general manager of marketing at Johnson Matthey, the world's largest platinum marketing group, said prices should be able to hold on to present levels because supply and demand were in reasonable balance. A sudden rise in the three-month platinum leasing rates to about 5 per cent during the past few weeks indicated the tightness of physical supply, he added.

Platinum touched \$352.50 an ounce at one stage in London yesterday before meeting some profit-taking. It closed at \$361.75 an ounce, gold in London up \$1.55 an ounce at \$360.55.

## Gummer condemns 'illegal' trade threats

THE EUROPEAN Community will not be bullied into making concessions in world trade talks, Mr John Gummer, the British minister of agriculture and current president of the council of EC farm ministers, said yesterday, reports Reuter from Brussels.

"We are still threatened with illegal action," he said, referring to Washington's potential retaliation in a long-running dispute with the community over oilseeds.

Mr Gummer was speaking after EC agriculture ministers heard Mr Ray MacSharry, the European agriculture commissioner, report on what he saw as highly unsatisfactory negotiations on the Uruguay Round of world trade talks at the Group of Seven summit in Munich earlier this month.

Mr Gummer said the US had failed to respond to EC reform concessions relevant to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations. The ball was now in Washington's court, he added.

GATT negotiations should have been completed in December 1990, but collapsed over the issue of trade-distorting subsidies, which still has to be resolved.

A decision on Italy's demand for a bigger milk quota, the issue that nearly scuppered negotiations on Common Agricultural Policy reforms in May, were deferred at yesterday's council session.

Italy says it severely underestimated the number of farmers who should have been counted in when quotas were originally set. It has been over-producing, and sees a boost in quotas as the solution.

But northern countries that have played by the rules have been aghast at what they see as Italy being rewarded for breaking them.

Yesterday's session also saw the beginning of discussions on developing systems for controlling payments to farmers under the reformed CAP.

The European Commission proposed that Ecu16m (82m)

A new European Parliament inquiry into European Community farm fraud is to be headed by Labour Euro MP John Tomlinson.

The probe is going ahead despite assurances from Mr John Gummer, the British president of the council of EC agriculture ministers, that the problem is under control.

Mr Tomlinson, MEP for Birmingham West, has been asked by the European Parliament's budgetary control committee to produce a detailed report on losses to EC taxpayers – estimated at £2.5bn a year – from the community's complex system of grants and subsidies.

Mr Tomlinson yesterday described the EC's farm policy to be "the greatest incentive to crime in Europe today".

Earlier, Mr Gummer played down the extent of the problem, insisting that frauds highlighted by the EC's court of auditors had already been tackled.

should be provided over three years towards the cost of developing such control systems. Ministers had mixed views on this, ranging from suggestions that there should be no such funding at all, to calls for a big increase.

Several ministers had doubts as to whether the system could be implemented on schedule by January 1.

On the definition of land parcels for identification and control purposes, those tending to favour an EC-wide definition were pitted against those who supported the right of member states to devise their own systems.

There was widespread backing, however, for a single system of animal identification for both veterinary purposes and for payments.

Some ministers were opposed to having to make an annual declaration on production and animal numbers.

All these issues will be followed up at the farm ministers' September meeting.

## Polish miners stage stoppages

By Christopher Bobinski in Warsaw

POLISH MINERS at five coal pits yesterday staged work stoppages amid a coal glut which is forcing management to introduce temporary lay offs and cut miners' incomes.

The stoppages at the Zabrze Bielszowice mine and four others in the Katowice area come in the wake of a continuing two-week-old sit-in by radical unionists from the Solidarity 80 movement at the State Coal Agency headquarters in the

city. The protesters are demanding wage increases for miners, as well as cuts in taxes levied on pits and forgiveness of mounting mine debts.

Leaders of the other mining unions met yesterday to decide whether to call an industry-wide token stoppage, while Mr Wlodek Niewiarowski, the new industry minister is to see the unions today in Warsaw.

The government ended subsidies to coal mining at the end of March and the industry has gone into debt as coal prices have failed to rise in the face of

low demand, following a mild winter and the continuing industrial recession.

Pit-head stocks have now reached some 6m tonnes – equivalent to two weeks output by the country's 71 pits. Poland produced 58.4m tonnes of coal in the first five months of the year, matching output in the same period last year. Sales outside Poland by Węglowisko, the state-owned coal trader, which continues to dominate the export market, reached 6.6m tonnes in the first five months.

## Call for cocoa price of £1,400 a tonne

By Frances Williams in Geneva

THE NEW international cocoa agreement now under negotiation in Geneva should aim to defend a price level of about £1,400 a tonne, or more than double the current price, Mr Alain Gauze, the Ivory Coast's minister for commodities and head of its delegation to the talks, hinted yesterday. He told a news conference that this "would be a good price".

However, Mr Gauze did not

disguise the fact that producing and consuming countries, now half way through a three-week negotiating session, remained far apart on the objectives and financing of the new accord. The present International Cocoa Agreement expires in September 1993.

Discussion has centred on the proposal made by consuming countries for the introduction of a withholding scheme to help supply back from a saturated world market, coupled with longer-term measures to curb production.

Producers, led by Ivory Coast, which accounts for a third of world output, say they are willing to accept withholdings, provided the plan reverses the downward trend in prices, stabilises the market and lifts

the price "to remunerative levels".

Mr Gauze would not say yes yesterday how much cocoa would need to be withheld from the market to defend a price of £1,400 a tonne. However, he estimated that 400,000-450,000 tonnes would have to be held back just to cover the costs of the scheme. He added that producers did not want any ceiling on withholdings and defended the limit proposed by consumers of 300,000 tonnes as "inappropriate".

With the inclusion of the 240,000 tonnes buffer stock now held by the International Cocoa Organisation, world cocoa stocks were around 1.2-1.3m tonnes, he said.

Mr Gauze also criticised consumer proposals to finance the proposed withholding scheme principally from payment of arrears to the International Cocoa Organisation. The organisation is owned nearly 94m, much of it by the Ivory Coast and Brazil. Producers say the new scheme, like the old, should be financed by a levy, should be imposed by a levy on cocoa trade, including the exports of countries not members of the agreement, such as Malaysia and Indonesia. Mr Gauze said arrears should be repaid by a surcharge on the levy.

## W Australian nickel project delayed

By Kenneth Gooding, Mining Correspondent

DOMINION MINING has delayed until early next year a decision about possible development of its Yakkabindie nickel deposit in Western Australia, which could meet up to 3 per cent of annual western world demand for the metal.

However, Dominion had two offers from potential joint venture partners to take a share in the A\$470m (US\$280m) project.

Marketing plans and a feasibility study had taken longer than expected to prepare, so the forecast decision date of August this year was now

unlikely to be achieved. A decision on full commitment to the project is unlikely before early 1993," it said.

Yakkabindie would, when fully on stream, produce about 21,000 tonnes of nickel a year from 6m tonnes of ore. Dominion said the project would be able to produce a unique sulphide concentrate containing more than 20 per cent nickel and with minimal impurities.

Dominion previously suggested that it would be willing to see its share in the project fall below 50 per cent.

"Numerous expressions of interest have already been made by prospective financiers," it said yesterday.

## WORLD COMMODITIES PRICES

## MARKET REPORT

COCOA prices at the London Futures and Options Exchange fell sharply yesterday, continuing the downturn that began on Monday morning. As speculators and investment funds unloaded holdings the September delivery price tumbled to \$354.60 a tonne, down \$22 on the day and \$38 from the 21-month peak reached on Monday. Traders suggested, however, that the market was likely to consolidate at around the present level, which was still \$25 above the 18 1/2-year low reached nearly three weeks ago. At the London Metal Exchange COPPER and TIN prices made modest gains from Monday's

## London Markets

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Crude oil (per barrel FOB) + or -

Premium Gasoline \$220-224 +2

Brent Blend (dated) \$185.65-190.25 +2.25

Brent Blend (Aug) \$200.00-201.10 +2.25

W.T.I. (1 pm est) \$213.35-145.00 -1.25

Oil products (INR/tonne) + or -

Premium Gasoline \$220-224 +2

Brent Blend (dated) \$185.65-190.25 +2.25

Brent Blend (Aug) \$200.00-201.10 +2.25

W.T.I. (1 pm est) \$213.35-145.00 -1.25

Marketing plans (INR/tonne) + or -

Premium Gasoline \$220-224 +2

Brent Blend (dated) \$185.65-190.25 +2.25

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Marketing plans (INR/tonne) + or -

Premium Gasoline \$220-224 +2

Brent Blend (d









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## **NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE COMPOSITE PRICES**





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## FINANCIAL TIMES SURVEY

# JAPAN

Wednesday July 15 1992

### SECTION III

Japan is gripped by serious doubts over its economy and confused and uncertain about its role in the world. But even in bad times the Japanese economy still continues to out-perform those of the US and Europe. Stefan Wagstyl investigates

## Doubts and confusion

MR KUCHI MIYAZAWA, Japan's prime minister, played his part well at last week's Munich summit of the Group of Seven Industrialised countries. With his quick mind and fluent command of English, he did his country proud.

But behind Mr Miyazawa's polished performance is a country gripped by serious doubts over its economy, and confused and uncertain about its role in the world. These concerns are coming to the fore in the campaigns now under way for national elections to be held on July 26 for seats in the Diet's upper house.

Many Japanese fear that the recent collapse of land and stock prices could herald a long slowdown for the whole economy. The worldwide economic downturn has come late to Japan but in the past year it has arrived with a vengeance. Economic growth, which remained at a healthy 3.5 per cent in the year to March 1992, could fall to below 3 per cent in the current financial year ending in March 1993.

The effects of this slowdown are rippling around the world. Economic growth has declined, but so, too, has the growth which was previously taking place in imports. As a result Japan's trade surplus has surged from \$52bn in 1990 to a likely \$100bn plus in 1992.

Meanwhile, the turmoil in Tokyo's financial market has

undercut Japanese investors' capacity to invest overseas - after exporting record amounts of capital in the 1980s, Japan last year became a net capital importer.

The government is considering economy-boosting measures, including extra public spending of about Y6,000bn. But there are doubts in Tokyo about whether this will prove sufficient. There are fears that - as well as a severe short-term cyclical down-swing

in demand - the economy faces unsettling long-term structural changes. As Mr Ichiro Ozawa, a leading member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and possible future prime minister, said recently: "I see the Japanese economy facing quite a serious structural recession. In many ways we have enjoyed very good economic conditions in the past. But it is impossible to continue behaving in the same way in the future."

The mood in Tokyo is so grim that Japan's strengths are being forgotten. The truth is that in bad times as in good, the Japanese economy continues to out-perform the US and Europe.

Companies in key industries, including steel, machine tools, motors and electronics, are under pressure. But their foreign competitors are also suffering. Even in a slowdown, Japanese companies are loath

to cut research and development spending or capital investment. They do not sack their employees, except as a last resort. While demand for recruits has eased in the past year, vacancies still outnumber job-seekers by about 20 per cent.

Nevertheless, companies face some difficult challenges. They must adjust to the fact that the high-speed growth of the 1980s was, in retrospect, something of an aberration. The outlook is for slow growth, in which costs will be restrained and expansion plans considered for their contribution to profits as well as to sales. Capital costs have soared due to the difficulty of raising stock market funds. Banks, burdened by bad debts, will find it harder to lend than in the past, thus creating a potential shortage of credit.

On the demand side, companies cannot look to exports for

salvation because of rising protectionist sentiment in the main export markets of the US and Europe. At home, Japanese consumers could eventually generate a huge surge in demand - if they were allowed to spend as freely as westerners.

Unfortunately, the job of liberalising Japan's tightly-regulated post-Second World War economy is not yet finished. The rules still favour producers at the expense of consumers. For example, food prices are kept artificially high to protect farmers. As a result, Japanese must spend more than 30 per cent of their disposable income on food compared with about 20 per cent for Americans and Germans. So the Japanese have less available for other goods and services.

Mr Miyazawa's government recently published a five-year plan which puts a priority on

improving the consumers' lot. There is no doubt about the sincerity of Mr Miyazawa's intentions. But his scope for action is limited by his lack of political clout inside the ruling Liberal Democratic party. Also, he has been undermined by financial scandals and by a constant need to do deals with opposition parties to secure the passage of legislation.

After nearly 40 years in office, the Liberal Democratic party's ageing leaders see little need to take risks. They are not willing to ride rough-shod over the interests of their supporters who are often, like farmers, prime beneficiaries of the economic status quo.

As Mr Ozawa said in a recent press conference: "Japanese people... have not really got out of their old ways of living and thinking. Change will require a great deal of effort."

The LDP has good reason to

be cautious. It has presided over nearly 40 years of prosperity. Japanese people in opinion polls express complaints about their living standards, especially about housing costs, but are generally satisfied with the country's economic management. Nevertheless, if the current slowdown were to turn into a prolonged full-blown recession, accompanied by bankruptcies, sackings and a decline in real income, the pressure for action might become intense.

If Japanese are more concerned about their economy than at any time since the oil shocks of the 1970s, they are also more worried than in the past about their country's political role in the world.

Japan has responded to international demands for it to play a more active part in global affairs by passing a bill which will allow Japanese troops to serve on United

Nations peace-keeping missions. Tokyo was stung into action by criticism of its role in the Gulf crisis when it contributed money to the allied cause but no manpower.

However, the peace-keeping bill has left Japan divided between those who believe an economic superpower should share the burden of policing the world and those who fear such involvement could lead to a revival of Japanese militarism. The government, despite its internationalist intentions, will be obliged to tread carefully for fear of inflaming domestic opposition.

Meanwhile, the end of the Cold War could lead to changes in east Asian international relations. The cornerstone of Japan's policies remains close friendship with the US, including a security alliance. Both partners remain committed to each other and indeed are held together by a common interest in, among other things, the stability of the region.

But this interest differs in subtle ways. For example, Japan has been noticeably more friendly than the US towards China since the suppression of demonstrations in Beijing in 1989. Tokyo is considering an invitation from Beijing for Emperor Akihito to visit China this autumn.

Japan's policies are also coloured by its dispute with Russia over territories seized by Soviet troops in 1945. Japan insists that it cannot extend large-scale financial support to the states of the former Soviet Union until its claims are recognised.

While Tokyo has fudged this condition in recent years - by granting increasingly large quantities of humanitarian aid - it remains reluctant to participate in the grand plans for economic assistance being formulated in the US and Europe.

But Japan's willingness to become more independent of the US in its foreign policies is strictly limited. As the debate over the peace-keeping bill showed, Tokyo's priority is to grow in its role as a fully-fledged member of the international community. And that community, for the foreseeable future, is US-led.

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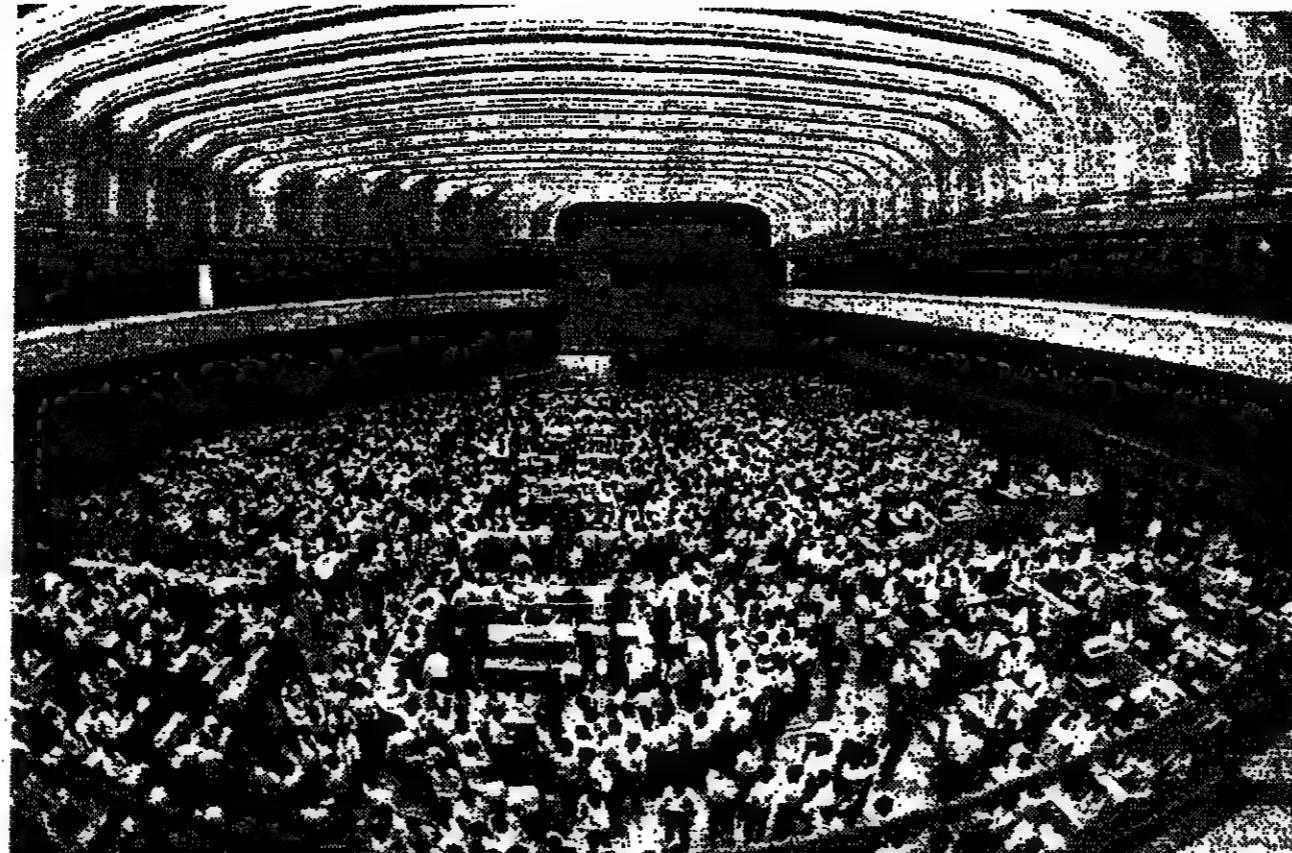
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Tokyo stock exchange: The economic downturn came late to Japan but in the past year it arrived with a vengeance. Picture: Ashley Adcock



Before one of the first clay models entered the wind tunnel for testing, they placed seven microphones in strategic locations. This enabled them to study and monitor those areas particularly susceptible to wind noise.

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## JAPAN 2

## □ POLITICS

## Reform will be difficult

AFTER months in the political doldrums, Mr Kiichi Miyazawa, the Japanese prime minister, is enjoying something of a revival.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will fare much better than it feared in the forthcoming elections to the Diet's upper house, to be held on July 26.

However, the recovery in the prime minister's fortunes will do little to improve his capacity to govern. The LDP is steadily losing control of the Diet, making it increasingly difficult to secure the passage of anything except routine legislation. This month's poll will probably make it even more difficult than before to solve the party's more serious challenges – including electoral reform, possible revisions to tax laws, and international demands for an end to the ban on rice imports.

Only a few months ago, LDP officials considered ditching Mr Miyazawa. The government had suffered badly from the prime minister's handling of two nasty political scandals involving allegations of bribe-taking, from the economic downturn, and from the arguments over the controversial bill to allow Japanese troops to

serve on United Nations missions. Mr Miyazawa's fortunes hit rock-bottom when the LDP lost a by-election in Nara – an ancient capital of Japan, and a traditional LDP stronghold.

But the prime minister's stock has since staged an unexpected recovery. This is partly caused by a lull in the two traditional scandals which grabbed so much space in newspapers earlier this year.

Interest in the affair concerning Kyowa, a steelframe maker turned property developer, has largely died away, following the arrest of a former cabinet minister who now faces trial on bribe-taking charges. The public prosecutor's office is still investigating a much larger scandal involving Sagawa Kyubin, a truck delivery company, and its links with gangsters and politicians. But leaks from the prosecutor's office have become scarce in recent weeks. Whether the probe has come to an end, or whether the prosecutors are

merely maintaining a discreet silence until after the election, remains to be seen.

The prime minister has also benefited politically from the passage of the peace-keeping forces legislation, which completed its tortuous way through the Diet in early June, amid stormy scenes inside the chamber and demonstrations in the street outside. According

to opinion polls, people remain deeply divided over the bill; its opponents are concerned about a possible revival in Japanese militarism. But LDP officials are relieved that the inter-party arguments over the bill are finished at last. Moreover, the opposition parties' filibustering tactics, including the 'ox-walk' slow-voting technique, won credit from no-one.

Even the decline in the stock market and the economy seems, paradoxically, to have bolstered support for the LDP and the government. In the initial stages of turmoil in the financial markets, voters were happy to criticise the government, particularly the finance ministry. However, as the economy has deteriorated further, so alarm about the country's future has spread throughout Japan. As in previous economic crises, there is a growing feeling that the Japanese must pull together a sentiment which has rallied support for the ruling party

just in time for the upper house elections.

Polls will be held in half the seats in the 352-member chamber. Elections are held every three years – with members sitting for six years, so the seats now being contested were last fought over in 1986, when the LDP won a resounding victory on the back of the personal popularity of Mr Yasuhiro Nakasone, the then prime minister. The party therefore expects to lose seats this time. The question is how many.

It is defending 75 out of 127 seats being contested. LDP officials believe they might lose about 10. Independent analysts think it could be as many as 14.

But even the loss of these few seats could be crucial in future national politics. This is because the LDP lost its majority in the upper house in 1989, when voters registered their names at the party's involvement in the Recruit affair. Since then, the ruling party

has relied in the upper house on the support of the main centrist party, Komeito. For example, without Komeito's 20 votes in the upper house, the LDP would have failed in its attempt to pass the peace-keeping bill.

Thus, although the LDP has kept its majority in the lower house, despite all the trials of the Recruit affair and other scandals, its ability to pass legislation is now severely limited.

The LDP and Komeito together hold 134 seats out of 232: a bare majority. If the LDP loses 10 seats this majority is forfeited (even if Komeito loses no seats, which seems unlikely). So the LDP will be forced to rely on making deals with other centrist parties, including the Democratic Socialist Party. The LDP and DSP have worked together before. But the LDP's inter-party clout will decline in proportion to the seats it loses.

LDP officials are concerned about the erosion of their control of the Diet. They point out that Japanese parliamentary practice has long included close consultation with opposition parties. So a smaller representation in the upper house may make little difference.



Miyazawa: hit rock-bottom when the LDP lost Nara by-election

heavy burden on wage-earners, while giving numerous breaks to the self-employed. Land use laws still favour farmers over townspeople. So do electoral regulations which give people living in rural constituencies a disproportionately big voice in the Diet.

Leading LDP officials are aware of these problems. But it is difficult for them to reform a system which they helped to create, and which helps to keep them in power.

Stefan Wagstyl

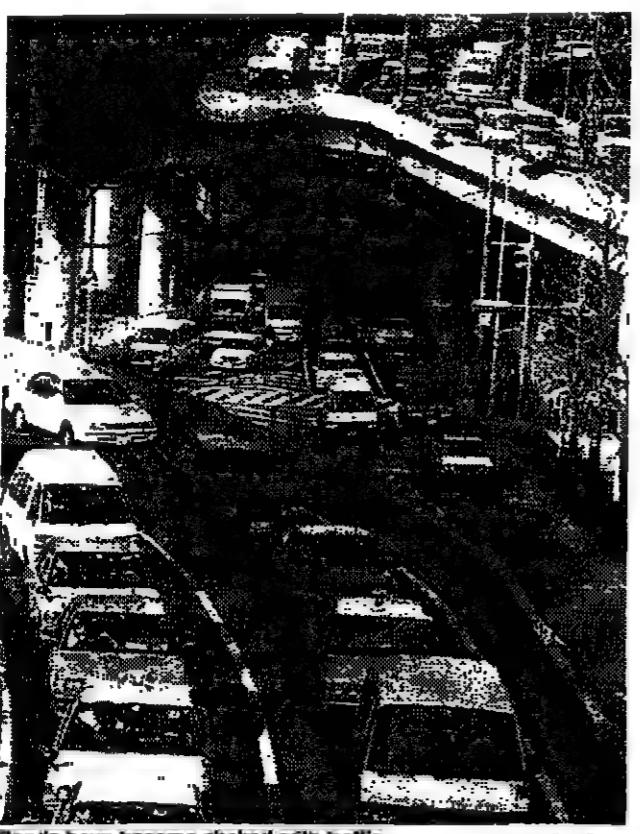
keenly felt. The government could easily re-ignite wage inflation with an overly hasty attempt to jump-start the economy.

In the end, though, the government is certain to act, if only because Japan has come under intense international pressure to increase domestic demand, boost imports and help to pull the rest of the world out of the economic slump. Already, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has proposed a programme of public works that would result in some Y6,000bn to Y7,000bn of extra spending. A decision will come in the autumn.

The rapid growth in the economy in the late 1980s, accompanied by easy money policies, temporarily put off the day when companies would have to face the fact that Japan is becoming less accommodating to manufacturing industries. Now, with labour both in short supply and expensive, land prices sky high, roads choked with traffic, and the cost of capital having risen sharply, this fact is increasingly apparent.

The government is also deeply fearful about rekindling inflation. With Japan's consumer prices now increasing at about 3.5 per cent annually, this fear looks ill-founded. But what haunts both the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Japan is the underlying tightness in the labour market, where a structural shortage of manpower results from Japan's declining birth rate. Indeed, the frequently proposed solution for the economy – to spend money on public works – would pour money into the construction industry, where the labour shortage is most

Steven Butler



Roads have become choked with traffic

Picture: Glyn Genia

WORDS such as "disaster" and "horror" are increasingly entering the vocabulary of economists describing Japan. As each month's statistics are released by the government, economists search for a sign that the economy, rapidly plunging, is about to hit bottom.

Instead, and despite repeated government assurances to the contrary, the accumulated evidence points towards an extended period of weak demand, falling production and dismal corporate profits. The turning point towards renewed growth is increasingly elusive.

Of course, this is still a Japanese-style recession that is unlikely to meet the standard economist's definition of two quarters consecutive decline.

Economic growth this year is likely to reach at least 2 per cent, and employment remains at high levels. But the manufacturing sector is in steep decline, financial markets are devastated, and the contraction of demand has stemmed the flow of imports, pushing up Japan's already large trade surplus and angering its trading partners.

The latest "horror" came at

the end of June, when the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) reported a decline of 2.7 per cent in industrial output during May, compared to a year ago.

A sharp drop in industrial output was by itself expected, and in principle it was a healthy sign because it showed that manufacturers were making efforts to cut back high levels of unsold goods in inventory by reducing the flow from the factory.

Yet in this case, although in May there was the steepest year-to-year fall in manufacturing since 1970, bloated inventories also edged up by a seasonally adjusted 0.4 per cent – because the flow of goods out of inventory to the market also slowed as demand contracted.

The Bank of Japan and the Ministry of Finance officially expect the period of inventory adjustment – when invento-

ries decline to normal levels that allow manufacturers to restore production cuts – to last until the autumn. Salomon Brothers Asia, however, now believes the turning point is unlikely to come before the spring of 1993.

To bring inventory levels back to historical trends by November, manufacturers would have to cut output by 1 per cent a month, which Salomon Brothers believes is unrealistically severe.

The government case for optimism is based in part on the most recent Tankan, or short-term economic survey.

The survey uncovered an unexpectedly sharp decline in business confidence in May, which hit the lowest level in five years. But the survey also showed that manufacturers were expecting a modest improvement in business conditions by September.

Corporate profits were expec-

tionally comfort itself that unemployment is negligible, at 2.1 per cent, compared to an average of 6.4 per cent in the seven largest industrialised economies. The labour market is softening and overtime and bonus awards are being cut, but the direct human cost of the slowdown is small.

The government is also deeply fearful about rekindling inflation. With Japan's consumer prices now increasing at about 3.5 per cent annually, this fear looks ill-founded. But what haunts both the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Japan is the underlying tightness in the labour market, where a structural shortage of manpower results from Japan's declining birth rate. Indeed, the frequently proposed solution for the economy – to spend money on public works – would pour money into the construction industry, where the labour shortage is most

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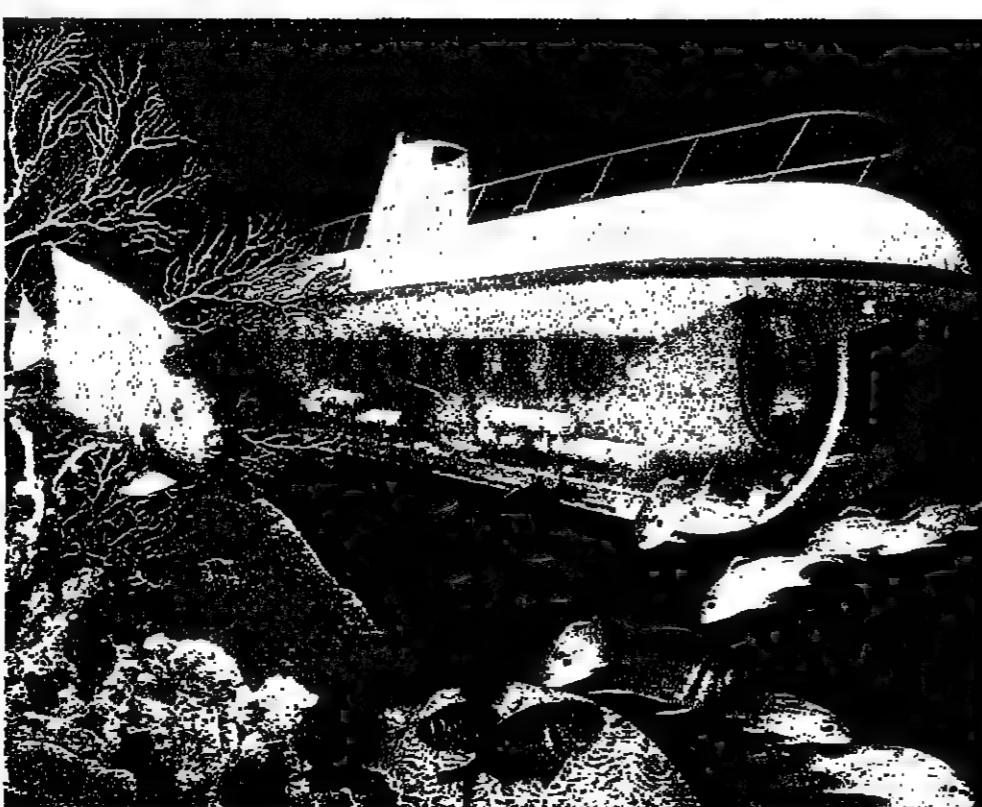
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## □ END OF THE CONSUMER BOOM

## Appetites dampened

ANOTHER WORLD is the name of the foreign luxury goods section at the main Tokyo branch of Mitsukoshi, the prestigious Japanese department store.

It served as a thriving bazaar for the "heiress aristocrats" those who made their fortunes from rising stock and land prices in the late 1980s and who took their title from the new emperor's reign that began in 1889.

But foreign luxury goods manufacturers and Japanese retailers are now confronting another world from the one two years ago when conspicuous consumption was in vogue and expensive imported items were eagerly bought. The bursting of Japan's bubble economy has dampened the appetite among consumers for French jewellery, German sedans or Italian suits.

The declining interest in branded products has hurt European makers of luxury goods, particularly hard because they were the main beneficiaries of the spending boom. Ms Mami Toyonaga, an analyst with the Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro), said: "1988 and 1990 were the

years of the EC brandname." Imports of European luxury goods have dropped sharply since then, and were largely responsible for the 4.2 per cent decline last year in EC exports to Japan of \$31.8bn, according to Jetro.

Works of art and antiques from France, which accounted for half of the art objects shipped from abroad to Japan, fell by 50.9 per cent to \$33m. Imports of jewellery from the EC slipped by 14.1 per cent to \$37.4m, while diamonds and other precious stones from Belgium and the Netherlands declined by 11.2 per cent to \$80m.

Imports of luxury cars from the EC fell by 16.1 per cent to \$1.75bn, while European clothes suffered a drop of 11.2 per cent to \$1.85bn. EC furniture declined by 8.9 per cent to \$31.6m while handbags and luggage dipped by 2.5 per cent to \$71.4m. This trend has continued for the first four months of 1992, with only European executive cars making a slight recovery; imports growing by 9.6 per cent.

It is not only European luxury goods producers who have been affected by the passing of

the brandname fad. Japanese department stores that heavily promoted imported products suffered profit falls last year. Mitsukoshi blamed the decline in art and luxury purchases for its 43 per cent drop in pre-tax earnings to Y10.5bn for fiscal 1991, a result that forced it to delay plans to expand its store network.

Mitsukoshi now has a large inventory of Impressionist paintings and other European art that it bought at the height of a market that was mainly driven upward by Japanese investment. The value of Mitsukoshi's collection has subsequently fallen and it is waiting for a recovery in prices, which could take several years, before offering it to the public.

It is one indication that Japanese consumers have become price-conscious. European luxury goods companies in Japan realise that they can no longer sell their products on snob appeal. A high price tag was once considered an advantage in attracting Japanese consumers who wanted to impress neighbours with their wealth.

European luxury goods makers have now changed their marketing strategy by promoting

the brand name as a guarantee of good quality and design rather than as a status symbol. They are also cutting their prices or introducing low-cost products.

"Although the Japanese consumer used to purchase the brand rather than the product, quality has become the most important consideration and the competitiveness of price is another key factor," says Mr Guy Leymarie, president of Cartier Japan. "It proves that Japanese consumers have rapidly matured in their buying habits."

"Sales of big-ticket imported items have fallen, but there is a rise in sales of imported goods at the lower price end of their respective product segments. Japanese still want brand name products, but at a cheaper price," explains Mr Yoichi Kimura, a Jetro researcher who has helped compile a study on popular imported products.

Prices for some foreign jewellery brands at Mitsukoshi, for example, have been reduced by 10 per cent, which has improved sales of jewellery costing less than Yen.

The promotion of less expensive



Foreign luxury goods manufacturers and Japanese retailers are now confronting another world

car models, rather than imported goods boom.

"Although Tokyo has only 20 per cent of the population, it accounts for 40 per cent of the luxury goods sold. But we see growth potential in other areas," explains Mr Osamu Tanegashima, director of operations of BMW Japan.

Sales of BMW sedans are on the rise in Osaka and Nagoya, although they remain depressed in Tokyo.

Louis Vuitton is also concentrating on a regional marketing strategy instead of cutting prices to improve sales. Indeed,

the company took the risky

step last year of raising prices

by 5 per cent. Although sales consequently fell by 10 per cent to Y3.5bn in 1991 and are expected to decline by 5 per cent this year, company officials defend the decision.

The company wants to maintain the high profit margins that exist in the Japanese market, which accounts for almost 30 per cent of Louis Vuitton's total sales. Prices for Louis Vuitton products in Japan are 45 per cent higher than in France. Officials also worry that price reductions would harm its brand image. Louis Vuitton hopes that the opening of new outlets in Kyushu and

western Honshu will curb the sales decline next year and set the stage for a recovery.

Other European luxury goods companies are also focusing on the top end of the market. "Sales of products in the middle price range have gone down, but sales are growing in the upper and lower ends of our product segment. This means that our sales will stabilise in 1992 after doubling between 1988 and 1991," says Mr Leymarie. "There are still enough clients who have the money to buy our best jewellery in the knowledge they are making a sound investment."

Mr Didier Handache gives a Gallic shrug at the mention of Japan's economic troubles. The importer of the French Venturi sports car says the country's financial woes are having little impact on sales of the expensive vehicles, which cost between Y12m and Y16m.

He predicts instead that sales will triple to 40 cars this year. There are plans to open a showroom soon in downtown Tokyo, which will display a new model priced at Y20m.

"We are aiming for the absolute top of the pyramid: people who are immune to the bubble economy," says Mr Handache, who counts among his customers baseball players and actresses. "There are always people who can afford such luxuries."

John Burton

## □ TRADE

## Sensitivity over surplus

timing of its first report on unfair trading policies.

The report, which found that the US had nine black marks out of a possible 10, was conceived when Japan's surplus was falling and was intended to show that not only the EC and the US could find fault with trading partners. While not providing for punitive action against violators, the report did achieve its aim of "stimulating discussion".

US Congress representatives dismissed the report on the grounds that "people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones", while even the Bush Administration complained that Japan was "not in a position" to criticise US policy. However, at least a few

officials in Tokyo were pleased that they had created a small stir in Washington and given the impression that Japan had become less passive.

Meanwhile, Mr Michio Watanabe, the foreign minister, dispatched letters to the US and EC complaining that they had failed to honour deadlines for reports under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Japan, one of about 15 countries to meet deadlines for submissions on industrial tariffs, presented a 450-page report, while the US furnished only a few pages and said that reductions were still under consideration.

And the foreign ministry also sent a separate letter to the EC complaining that a

Commission review of bilateral relations was no more than a collection of trade whinges and had ignored the potential for improved political and cultural ties. Japanese officials were particularly annoyed that the report bluntly suggested that the EC "convince Japan" to cut the trade surplus.

There is concern in Tokyo that the Commission will be tempted to use Japan as an issue on which to unite EC sentiment. When Mr Kichi Miyazawa, the prime minister, met Mr Jacques Delors, the Commission president, in early July, EC irritation at Japan's \$27bn surplus was made clear and it was suggested that the two sides establish an "experts forum" to study the "structural" causes. The proposal echoes the Structural Impediments Initiative (SII) launched by the US in which Japan promised to increase infrastructure spending and to speed the approval of larger stores in an attempt to change spending patterns and stimulate demand for imports.

If the trade surplus continues to increase, Washington will be under pressure to concede that SII was of limited use

and to devise another initiative to redress the imbalance. But, by focusing on the raw figures, Japan's trading partners are ignoring policy changes and overlooking the competitiveness of Japanese products.

The first signs of recovery in the US were accompanied by

an increase in Japanese exports, essentially because US consumers and companies were choosing to buy Japanese. And manufacturers of machine tools are able to export excess domestic capacity to the EC and Asia because of the enduring demand for quality production equipment.

That doesn't mean Japanese companies are completely free of blame. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) explains that some companies which expanded capacity in the late 1980s got their numbers badly wrong and are now being forced to export.

And the ministry also concedes that the financial "bubble" of the late 1980s distorted the improvement in the trade balance, having prompted an unsustainable increase in imports of luxury goods, including European prestige cars.

But Japan has done much

since the mid-1980s. The yen has appreciated sharply,

domestic demand was stimulated, markets were opened and import promotion campaigns were christened. Yen appreciation was supposed to make exporters less competitive, but companies adapted and have kept or expanded market share in industries such as cars and machine tools.

At the same time, leading manufacturers have established factories in south-east Asia and China dependent on high value-added components made in Japan.

These factories have created demand for imports from Japan and are exporting competitively-priced Japanese-branded goods to western markets. In the longer term, Japan will face political pressure not only from the EC and US, but also from the Asian countries which have recently surpassed the US and Canada as its largest regional market.

Robert Thomson

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## □ THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM

## Confidence crisis

EVER since it became clear that there was something desperately wrong with the Japanese stock market, the world financial community has been anxiously awaiting the fall-out.

The immediate fear was that the mighty Japanese financial institutions would pull out of the international arena; in particular, that banks would withdraw from overseas lending.

The problem was seen as a mechanical one: that as the Nikkei index fell, the banks' capital base would be eroded, causing them to cut back lending to keep within internationally-agreed rules on the ratio of loans to bank capital. That specific problem may have been exaggerated. However, the broader question of the health of the Japanese financial system remains open to anxious debate.

Mr Takashi Kiuchi, chief economist of the Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan, points out that the banks' ability to lend depends not only on the level of the equity market, which affects their asset base, but on the yen-dollar rate, which affects the value of their dollar-based loans. In both counts, he is fairly optimistic.

"We presently think the Nikkei index is below its normal range, which on various measures should be between 18,000 and 20,000. If it gets back within that range and the yen stays above Y180 to the dollar, the long-term credit banks and city banks can probably expand their lending at a similar rate to last year's 4 per cent. That didn't cause any strain, and this year we don't expect a recovery strong enough to need more than that."

Not everyone in Tokyo is so sanguine. Mr Peter Tasker, of the merchant bank and stockbroker Kleinwort Benson, says: "The problems of the banking system are very serious".

Suppose, to take an extreme case, the Nikkei index were to fall further to 10,000. "The cost of that would be paid by the real economy for years to come. The banks' hidden reserves would disappear, so they couldn't use them to offset bad loans as they did in the past. So it would take many years to absorb bad debts. That

means raising banking spreads, which means slower economic growth.

"The Japanese blue-chip industries may have access to alternative funding sources such as the Euromarkets. But the small- to medium-sized companies - the heart of industrial Japan - rely wholly on the banks. In a worst case, that could hold the economy back for six or eight years".

As for the contraction in Japanese bank lending abroad, it has already happened. Ms Alica Ogawa, of S G Warburg in Tokyo, says: "In the year to March 1990, loan growth overseas by the Japanese banks was three times as high as in the domestic market. By 1991 it was actually negative. In 1992 it will be the same, and again in 1993. The banks got badly burnt in the UK and have no interest in Europe. In the US, they're doing a lot of strategic re-thinking. The only overseas markets they're still interested in are in Asia, especially mainland China".

In any case, Ms Ogawa says, generalisations about the health of the Japanese banking system at present are largely meaningless. This is because nobody knows the true scale of their bad debts.

"In most Japanese towns, Ms Ogawa says, 'depositors have only the regional banks or the government savings bank to choose from. There has been a lot of switching into the savings bank already. If the regional banks had to announce bad debts equivalent to six or seven times their capital, the exodus would reach tidal wave proportions'.

Bad debts, Ms Ogawa estimates, must amount to between 5 and 10 per cent of the average bank's loan portfolio. In addition, she points out, some Japanese companies do not have to disclose off-balance sheet loan guarantees which they have made to their own subsidiaries. "In some cases, that could exceed the company's assets. So the banks don't always have a real idea of their customers' collateral either".

Even those who dispute the seriousness of the banks' position would concede that the other pillars of the Japanese

financial system, the insurance companies, are changing their behaviour as a result of the bursting of the bubble.

Mr Yasuo Kanzaki, deputy president of the Tokyo stockbrokers Nikko Securities, says: "In the past, the insurance companies weren't so concerned about currency risks. They claimed to have plenty of hidden reserves, so they could offset currency losses by realising unrealised capital gains.

"Now the stock market has collapsed, their currency risk is uncovered. A lot of my friends in overseas portfolio management now say that if the yen goes up any more, they're exposed. In the past, they could ask the domestic portfolio managers in the same organisation to cover for them from their profits. Now their domestic colleagues aren't so generous. And if the rising trend in the Japanese trade surplus is a guide, the yen could still be undervalued. So they're very nervous".

Given the traditional role of the Japanese insurers in funding the US budget deficit, this trend could eventually prove fairly serious. At the margin, it could push up US long-term interest rates, further jeopardising US economic recovery.

But in the end, the plight of the financial institutions in Japan belongs in a wider context. As time goes by, it is becoming apparent that the real effect of the bursting of Japan's asset bubble is to cause a crisis of confidence in the wider economy. "The body is sound", says Professor Makoto Utsuji of the Ministry of Finance, "but the brain is suffering from neurosis".

The problem thus goes beyond the availability of Japanese finance to service a world economic recovery. Important though that issue is, the real question is how far the Japanese economy will be able to act as an engine of growth to pull its trading partners out of recession. If the neurosis proves as serious as Professor Utsuji fears, the world may be disappointed.

Tony Jackson

IN explaining the real or feigned credit inexperience of Japanese consumers, a telephone agency told of the householder apparently surprised to find that the goods she ordered and received from a mail order house were not part of a free gift offer.

Having spent much of the 1980s convincing Japanese to increase their use of consumer loans and credit cards, consumer credit companies and department stores have realised that along with the cards should have come education about how to use them.

Personal bankruptcies rose from 11,273 in 1990 to 23,287 last year, prompting large Japanese companies which have traditionally relied on in-house collection departments, to turn to credit research agencies and lawyers.

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Mr Tamaki and of his Credit Assurance Co-operative (CAC), described as a "voluntary membership union" to which companies subscribe, has made collection more respectable.

As a voluntary membership union, CAC is able to send letters requesting that consumers pay outstanding debts to member companies, whereas debt collection, *per se*, is limited to Japanese lawyers.

Fear of gang loan-sharking inspired the restrictions, but the value of CCC and CAC is now becoming painfully obvious to leading companies.

CAC can encourage consumers to pay their debts or risk a black-listing on its credit files.

The union will send a card politely requesting the payment of a debt and follow up with a card that is still polite, but hints that the black list awaits a defaulter. Meanwhile,

the broader the client base of CCC and CAC, the more effective a black-listing becomes.

Mr Tamaki is also prospering from the realisation that retailers and credit companies need to be better informed about the credit background of consumers and small companies.

A credit industry survey of card penetration earlier this year found that the average adult holds 1.54 cards, up 0.24 from two years ago, and companies have realised that some of these cards should never have been issued.

One response has been for credit card companies to introduce tougher limits for new card-holders and improve collection procedures. But, for some bankrupts, the limits have come too late because they were able to accumulate substantial debt from companies more keen on building a customer base than on verifying credit worthiness.

A lawyer who specialises in debt collecting explained that an increasing amount of consumer and small company debt is backed by property or security assets greatly eroded by the collapse in the stock and property markets: "The only thing that will save some people is a rekindling of asset price inflation."

Source: Tokyo Shimbun Research

in an attempt to improve their debt recovery rates.

Mr Eiji Tamaki, chief executive of Consumer Credit Clearance (CCC), a credit information and collection agency, has noticed the difference. His client base has grown by more than 20 per cent over the past six months and he has been surprised by the removal of some companies that have sought help.

"People need education about credit. They have been given credit but they don't understand how to use it," said Mr Tamaki, who expects that his business will continue to grow rapidly over the next few months. "This is the winter after the bubble era."

The image of the debt collector in Japan has been tainted by the popular perception that only gangsters are in the business. But the success of Mr

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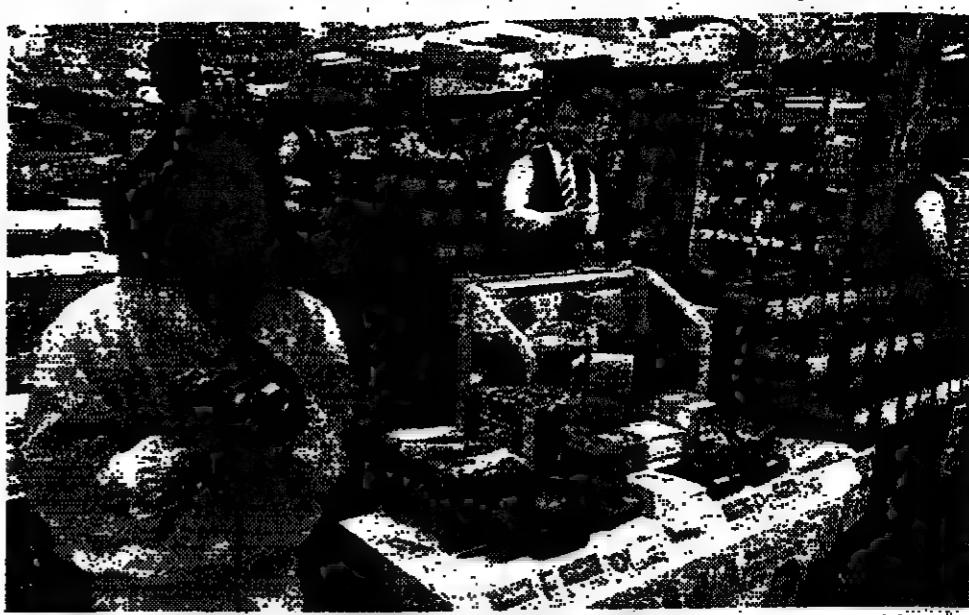
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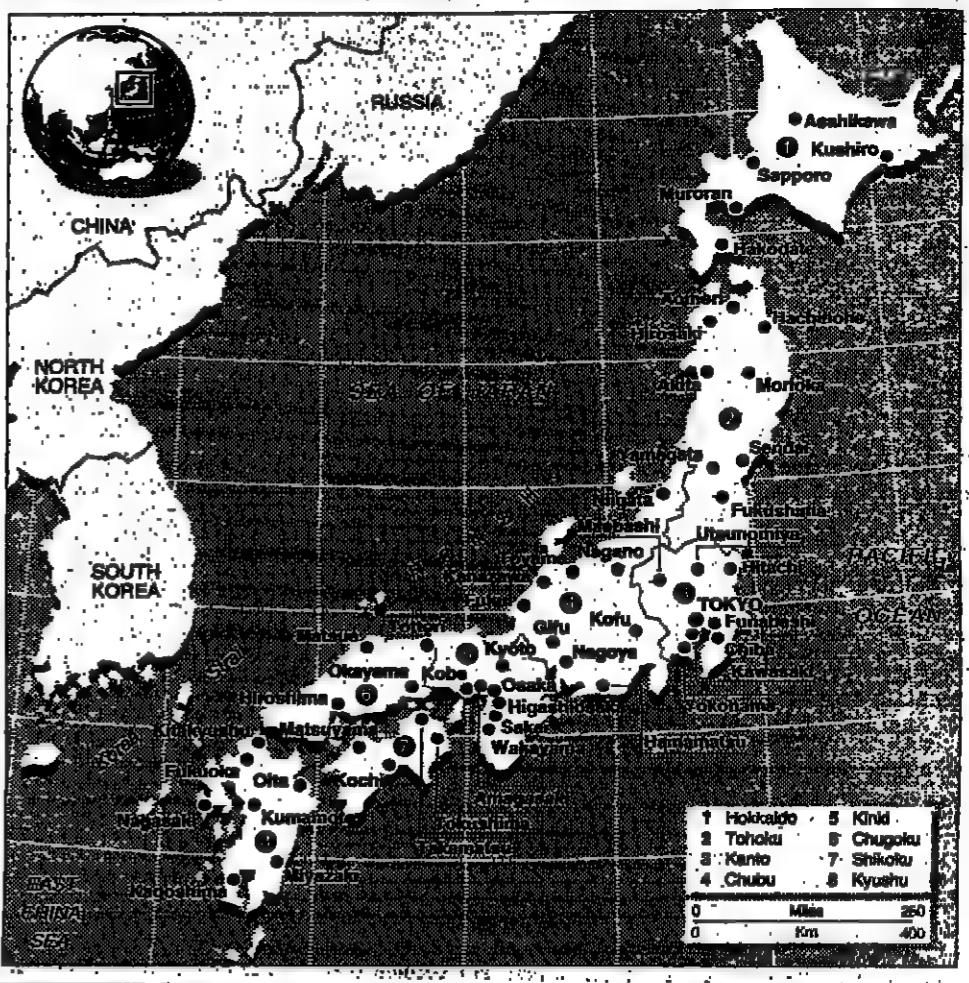
Robert Thomson

## □ DEBT

## Training needed with credit cards



Department stores realised that instructions should have come with the cards on how to use them.



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## JAPAN 5



The car industry is facing fresh new problems

Picture: Glyn Davis

FOR the giants of Japanese industry, the 1990s have got off to a dismal start. The most obvious problem is the bursting of the asset bubble, which has caused severe damage to balance sheets and sharply raised the cost of finance. But in more fundamental terms, it is striking how many of Japan's key industrial sectors face quite specific difficulties of their own.

The effects of a falling stock market, while real enough, may with luck prove temporary. Among the most publicised victims of the crash are companies which took advantage of soaring share prices in the late 1980s to raise cheap bond finance with stock warrants attached. Since the warrants are now worthless, the bonds must be refinanced at very much higher rates of interest – say, 6 per cent instead of 0.5 per cent.

Some estimates put the sum involved at \$140bn over the next four years, with the peak for refunding due next year.

Formidable, though this sounds, there seems little doubt that it can be afforded. First, as the Long Term Credit Bank of Japan argues, the money repaid will go back to the bond market. It will then presumably be reinvested in the new bonds which the com-

panies issue to pay for the old.

In addition, says Mr Yasuo Kaneko of Nikko Securities, Japanese companies still carry huge amounts of cash on their balance sheets. "A lot of companies still remember the days of 20 years ago when it was hard to raise money. So they still maintain unnecessary liquidity. That means they do not have to make demands on the banking system."

The problems of individual industries are another matter. Some of these may prove merely cyclical. Others may have to do with basic changes in Japanese patterns of work and consumption, which the bursting of the bubble has served merely to accelerate.

In the traditional Japanese areas of consumer electronics, for instance, the problem is one of a glut of old products and a shortage of new ones. Mr Frank Ohgai, planning director of the audio-video business of the electronics giant Matsushita, gives the background.

"In the audio-visual business, it usually takes ten years

for a product to get from introduction to maturity. The period 1945-55 brought the switch to transistor radios. In 1955-65 it was black and white TV, then in 1965-75 colour TV, then in 1976 video cassette recorders came along. In 1985 it was the turn of the compact disc. Now the audio-visual industry lacks a locomotive."

Mr Ohgai pins great faith on the success of high definition television to take up the running in the mid-1990s. In addition, he is optimistic about what are known in the industry as multi-media products, meaning home computers combined with audio-visual equipment. But as Mr Ohgai concedes, if these do not take off, the industry is in trouble.

According to the Electronic Industries Association of Japan (EIAJ), if the electronics industry were to carry on solely with its existing products, the Japanese market would shrink by two thirds between now and the year 2000. As it is, the EIAJ forecasts that the market of will grow 2½ times by then,

which means it will have to consist almost wholly of products which do not yet exist. It seems a tall order.

Similarly, the Japanese car industry is facing contraction in its domestic market for the first time in its history. In the old days, it would have responded by expanding its sales overseas. Now it faces two problems.

First, the sharp increase in trade friction in the past decade, particularly acute in the US market, puts aggressive exporting out of the question.

Second, Japanese car manufacturers are now huge overseas producers themselves. Honda, for example, makes more cars in the US than it does in Japan.

For the Japanese construction industry, much hope is pinned on a surge in infrastructure and housing spending in the 1990s. Certainly, it seems plausible that in a country where only 44 per cent of houses are connected with a main sewer, there should be a great deal of catching up to do.

borrowing. The first is unpopular with the public, the second with the government itself.

Behind all these individual problems are a group of familiar themes to do with shifts in Japanese society and the increase in trade friction. Japanese companies, it is now said, should pay more attention to generating return on equity than to expanding market share. Working hours should be reduced. The Japanese quality of life should be raised to reflect the country's standing in the world.

Proclaiming the end of the Japanese industrial miracle has been fashionable for years. Since the bursting of the asset bubble – surely a transitory phenomenon – it has become more popular than ever.

Those who underestimate the fundamental strength of the Japanese industrial machine do so at their peril. But there is no escaping the sense that the machine is becoming more mature and less different from its western rivals than it used to be.

The bubble may only have hastened the process of change. But one way or another, large chunks of Japanese industry may never be the same again.

Tony Jackson

## □ INDUSTRY

## Dismal start to decade

## □ RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

## Product innovation is price of survival

despite the air of gloom now fashionable in Japanese industry, the search for new products still goes on. Nowhere is this more true than in the electronics industry, where product innovation is the price of survival.

Severe though the latest downturn has been, it is not without precedent. Matsushita, for instance, saw its profits drop 38 per cent last year. But in the last two downturns, in the crisis years of 1975 and 1986, profits fell by 40 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.

This year, like most Japanese manufacturers, Matsushita will be cutting its capital expenditure heavily. But research and development spending will actually rise slightly to ¥430bn (\$2.5bn).

In the field of consumer electronics, products in development by the industry at large include wall-hanging flat screen TV sets, digital VCRs, digital compact cassettes and – above all – high definition television, or HDTV.

Mr Frank Ohgai, planning director of Matsushita's audio-visual division, says: "HDTV is

the one key to growth in our business. By 1995-6, that's going to be a very popular market. Then people are going to need everything else to go with it – camcorders, VCRs and so on."

The other key development, he says, is in the combination of audio-visual and computer equipment for use in the home. "But everyone is interested in that: the computer people like IBM, Apple and Microsoft, video games producers like Nintendo, movie software producers, educational publishers, manufacturers like ourselves."

"So we're still in a period of transition. The big question is: what format will become the

international standard and who will get there first."

It is only fair to point out that not everyone in Japan shares Mr Ohgai's confidence about the outlook for these products.

On the subject of HDTV, Mr. Masanori Moritani, a specialist writer on technology, is down-right pessimistic.

"The question for HDTV is one of software – that is, the programmes people actually watch. The popular TV programmes in Japan are quite shows, chat shows and programmes about eating out. What's the point of watching that kind of thing on high definition?"

A more serious fundamental

problem, he argues, lies in the size and cost – about \$10,000 – of the HDTV set itself. "In the past, Japanese companies have worked on miniaturisation and so on."

Whether that works for HDTV is an open question.

"Besides, earlier products like calculators or video recorders were genuinely new. People bought the earlier versions regardless of expense, and that helped to fund their development. But if you already have a TV, a VCR and a camcorder, where's the incentive to buy new versions which are three times as heavy and very much more expensive?"

Mr Moritani is equally pes-

simistic about developments involving home computers.

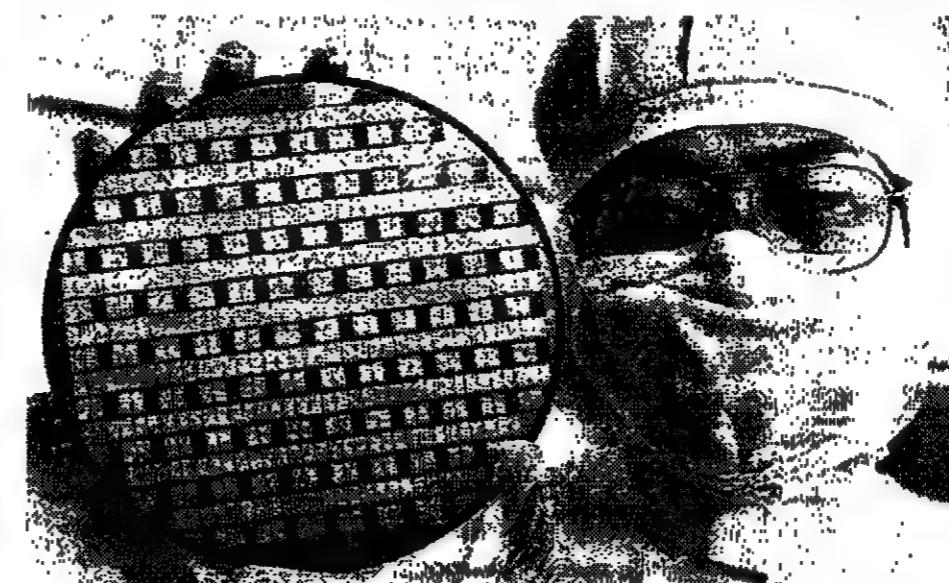
"The trouble about home computers is that people don't know how to use them. At present, PCs are used for enjoyment by enthusiasts. Will

housewives behave like computer freaks?"

"If you can produce a computer on which you push two or three buttons and it does something really interesting, that could be feasible. But

what are the interesting things a computer can do, and can we find them?"

Mr Ohgai of Matsushita does not deny that the technological risks are enormous. His conclusion, though, is not that



Despite the air of gloom in Japanese industry, the search for new products continues

they should not be undertaken, but that they need joint funding to spread the risk.

"To create these huge markets needs so much investment that individual companies can't afford it. What is needed is international consortia, with the manufacturers getting together to establish agreements on formats and technical standards and to spread the investment risk."

In these consortia, he believes, each geographical region should play to its strengths.

"The hardware and software have to proceed in parallel. On into the 21st century, the computer and entertainment will still be handled by the US. The hardware will be in the hands of Japan or maybe other Asian countries, which are catching up fast."

"As for Europe, we respect the fact that the basic R&D and technology is still in European hands. Japan's role here is its traditional one: to popularise the product and make it at an acceptable price".

Tony Jackson

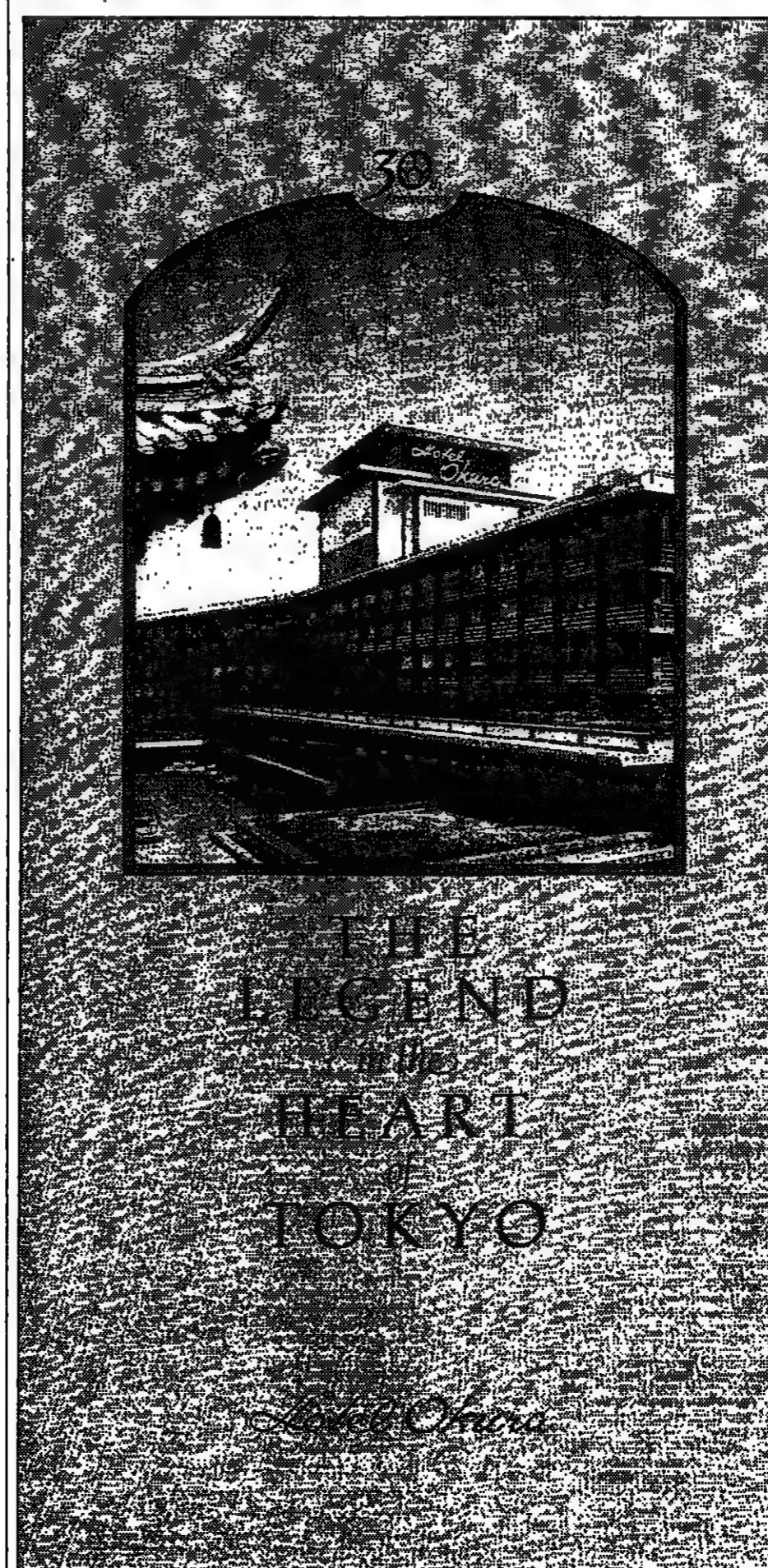


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## JAPAN 6

## □ MACHINE TOOL INDUSTRY

**Yamazaki's family affair**

"IT is a characteristic of the machine tool industry that from the top of the boom to the bottom of the slump the market can halve. We need to lower the break-even point so that we can survive that," says Mr Teruyuki Yamazaki, one of the world's leading machine tool makers.

Sitting in his sumptuous office - paintings by Ingres, Delacroix and Boucher, sculpture by Rodin, furniture old English - he scarcely looks hard up. There is no question, though, that times are tough. His company, Yamazaki Mazak, is running at 60 per cent capacity. "But we're in profit this month, anyway," he says.

The present slump in machine tool orders is partly a function of over investment by Japanese industry in the hubbub years. In the two years 1987-88, according to the Japan Machine Tool Builders' Association, domestic sales of machine tools virtually doubled. In the first four months of this year, domestic orders are down by nearly half.

However, this is not without precedent. Mr Tsunehiko Yamazaki, vice-president of the private family-owned business and Teruyuki's brother, says: "In the history of the industry, there have been plenty of examples of famous manufacturers dating back to the Industrial Revolution going under. The only way to avoid that is through continuous investment."

Yamazaki is expanding

capacity at its main plant at Minokamo in southern Japan. It has just opened its first Asian manufacturing operation, in Singapore. In the past three years, capital expenditure has averaged \$100m, or about 10 per cent of turnover. This year it will be about the same "not because we wanted it but because we were committed to it," says Teruyuki.

Yamazaki takes to the extreme the principle of automated manufacture. "A job which used to take 1,000 operatives can now be done with 10. We can generate \$10m with the same overheads as for \$1m," says Teruyuki.

The physical process this

**'This is the first time I've seen all the world economies going down together'**

involves is slightly spooky to watch. Machine tools are, of course, machines for making machines. The Minokamo plant takes this a step further. In essence, it is one large machine-making machine to make machines.

At one end of the plant unmanned loaders, some 10 feet long and three feet high, roam around the floor, playing tunes to warn any stray humans of their approach. One rolls up to the warehouse counter, playing "Annie Laurie" and deposits a couple of machined body parts.

Another robot, a spindly

giant about 100 feet high, whisks the parts up and stacks them under the roof. The loader picks up a pallet of small parts and moves off again. One of its fellows waits courteously for it to pass. It then moves off, tooting "Für Elise." They will go on doing this all night.

In a culture which still does not permit lay-offs, this gives a useful element of flexibility. "When the plant is running below capacity, as now, we can simply eliminate one of the unmanned night shifts. That's why we're not losing money," says Tsunehiko.

The process of automation, Teruyuki says, has further to go. "The cost of labour is rising and working hours in Japan are going to be reduced. So whether we like it or not, the number of craftsmen is going to be reduced. Even if the technology isn't cost-effective yet, it will be one day."

It is often alleged that in terms of quality and precision, Japanese machine tools still do not match the more expensive hand-built machines from Germany and Switzerland.

Tsunehiko's response to the charge is aggressive: "People sometimes say that such a precise machine should be hand made. We don't deny that some parts should be made by hand. But where unmanned operation is possible, a lot of talk to the contrary is sour grapes. Perhaps some people without the electronic knowledge are afraid to adapt it into their technology. We aren't."



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Yamazaki's other chief defence against the roller coaster nature of its industry has always been its international diversity. Japan accounts for only some 30 per cent of its sales, with 25 per cent coming from the US and a further 25 per cent in Europe. It manufactures in the US and the UK. Geographical spread is of limited use this time round.

"In the 30 years I've been in this business," says Tsunehiko, "this is the first time I've seen all the world economies going down together".

Teruyuki qualifies this slightly. "Although Japan and Europe are poor at present, the US and Far East are not so bad. So that still means that two out of our three main markets are down, which is a serious problem."

The forward picture is still confused. "In the past two months, there has been a small improvement in order intake in the UK and the US which we couldn't have expected four or five months ago. But in Germany and Japan, orders are weak compared with what we expected six months ago."

Does it help that Yamazaki has remained a private company? "It has advantages and disadvantages," says Teruyuki. "We'd been listed when the stock market was booming, we'd have had cheaper money. But the problem is that all that cheap money was someone else's. Now it has to be paid back."

There is a wider consideration. The machine tool industry's continuous demand for investment means the return on equity is typically low - perhaps lower than would be accepted by a public company. It is doubtless no coincidence that many of Yamazaki's competitors elsewhere in the world are private as well.

Teruyuki goes further: "Making machine tools is a job which should be handed down from generation to generation. Sometimes, a machine tool company is sold to a conglomerate because the son is not interested and it fades away."

Yamazaki was founded by Teruyuki's father in 1919. So will Teruyuki's son succeed him? "I believe so. He's already on the board."

Tony Jackson

THE day starts early in Tokyo's day labourer district. By dawn most of the men, many of whom had slept outside in blankets and cardboard, hang around the day labourer market - a block where the recruiters wait around with their minivans.

However, times are hard for the labourers of the Sanya district in east Tokyo. While the average Japanese office worker has yet to feel the direct effects of the recent downturn in the economy, the labourers, usually working on construction sites and small factories, are one of the first groups to face the slump in the real estate market and decline in capital investment by companies.

"It's a recession," says one labourer waiting for the teahouse, day job recruiter, to pick him up. "I'm lucky because I have connections. You can't find jobs without connections these days," he adds. He is one of 8,000 workers in the district, the second largest day labourer area following Osaka's Nishinari district. The men sleep in the day's cheap hotels and apartments, or outside on the streets if they cannot afford Y100 for a night.

At about 6.15 am those who have not been so lucky in finding work for the day, head off to the employment centre, run by the municipal government, a grey concrete building where day jobs are posted from 8.00 am.

Waiting for the shutter of the centre to open, the workers, mostly men in their 50s, wait around with cigarettes in hand, and their belongings in paper bags by their sides. "I couldn't pay the rent for three months, so I just ran away," says one man to his friend. "There are three good jobs in Tokyo, and one in Sendai," shouts another.

Once the shutter opens, the men crowd into the centre, which resembles an empty parking lot. The workers look intently at the job offers posted on the walls. However, the number is limited and only a handful of applicants are accepted. The daily average number of jobs at the three employment centres in Sanya fell 16 per cent in the last fiscal year to March, to 554.



Labourers are among the first to face the property market slump

By 8.00 am, the early morning buzz is over, and blue-suited office workers start their journey to offices surrounding Sanya. The lives of the Sanya dwellers are also affected by the symptoms of tuberculosis.

The demographic changes under way in Japan are apparent in Sanya. While most of the men look older than they actual are, due to the harsh manual labour, the average age of the labourers is rapidly rising.

During the day, the Sanya area becomes quiet, with a few of those who could not find work sleeping on the streets. Some of the labourers say they are turned off by the poor terms of the recruiters who are often connected with the yakuzza, or gangsters.

"I'd rather be out on the streets than work for the yakuzza," says one worker who chose to spend the day at the welfare centre. He complains that the an increasing number of employers try to exploit the labourers by charging unrealistic prices for meals, cigarettes, and these paper consumed during the day. With such expenses deducted, "by the end of the day, you end up being paid around Y4,000 although the promised amount is over Y10,000," he adds.

Mr Sato at Jouhoku says the number of labourers asking for aid or counselling has

risen in the past year. "The number rose over 3,000 last January for the first time in eight years," says Mr Sato. Last fiscal year to March, the number of workers seeking help concerning food rose by 64 per cent, while those in need for board rose by 30 per cent.

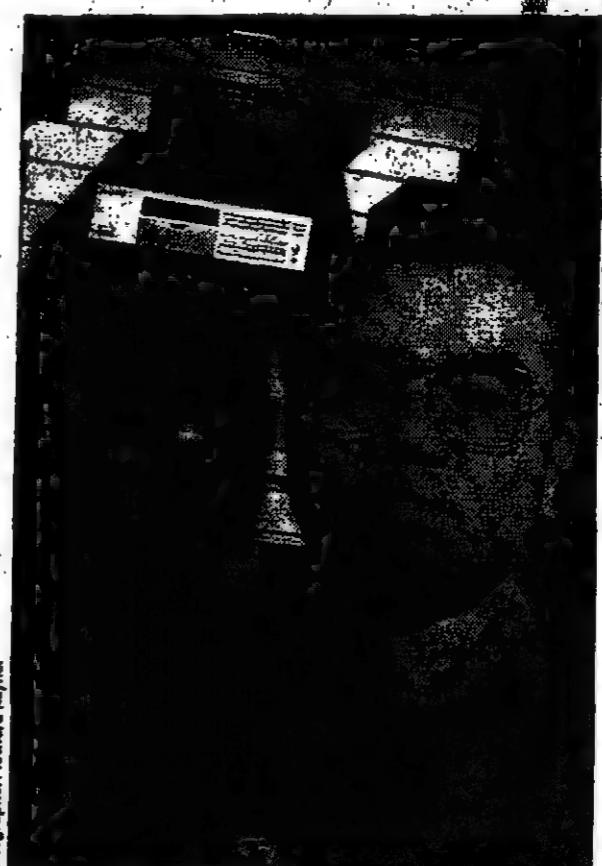
"You're drinking, aren't you," says a welfare worker sternly to a middle-aged straggly-haired man waiting for counselling. A high percentage of the Sanya dwellers are alcoholics, and many are in poor health due to malnutrition. "Get your free health inspection," urges a flier distributed by the welfare centre, listing the symptoms of tuberculosis.

The demographic changes under way in Japan are apparent in Sanya. While most of the men look older than they actual are, due to the harsh manual labour, the average age of the labourers is rapidly rising. In Sanya, some 60 per cent of the residents are over 50 years old, while the same age group constitutes only 30 per cent of the whole of Tokyo.

Another problem for the labourers is the increase in foreign illegal workers. Employers prefer to hire younger foreign labourers at cheaper prices. Mr Sato was concerned over the increasing number of Japanese labourers losing jobs to such foreigners. "The rise in tensions could lead to riots," he adds.

By sunset, most of the workers are back from their jobs. After retrieving their bags containing their belongings from the coin lockers, some head for the public baths. By 9.00 pm, the streets are quiet again, as the labourers of Sanya prepare themselves for another early morning ahead.

Emiko Terazono

WHY WAKEFIELD *Minagari*?

Photographer: Richard Keymer



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## JAPAN 8

□ INTERVIEW: Seiji Tsutsumi talks to Stefan Wagstyl

## A rare bird among businessmen

THE common image of Japanese businessmen is that they are always doing calculations on calculators in their rooms. I'm different," says Mr Seiji Tsutsumi.

It is no idle boast. Part businessman, part artist and part intellectual, Mr Tsutsumi, who is 61, is a rare bird among Japanese businessmen.

Saison Group, the conglomerate he leads, employs 145,000 people in everything from fast food and helicopters to luxury hotels. His interests include writing poetry and novels, modern art and the temples of Angkor Wat. His family history is the stuff of soap operas.

Mr Tsutsumi talks about himself in a slightly detached way, as if a little unsure of the many roles he plays. He seems shy but very determined – a man driven, as he says, by a hungry spirit.

This spirit was nurtured in a difficult childhood and youth. His father, Mr Yasujiro Tsutsumi, was a ruthless railway baron who founded Seibu Railway, one of Japan's biggest private railway companies, as well as Seibu Department Stores and Prince Hotels, a luxury hotel chain.

At the end of the Second World War, Mr Tsutsumi senior bought privatised Tokyo sites from impoverished Japanese aristocrats in a series of hard-driven deals, for which he earned the nickname Pistol Tsutsumi. He went into politics and became speaker of the Diet's lower house.

Mr Seiji Tsutsumi's life was blighted by the fact that he was the son not of his father's wife but of his mistress. His childhood was torn by the many conflicts generated by his father's pursuit of women. Mr Seiji Tsutsumi rebelled and, as a student, joined the Communist Party. With Japan still under US occupation and the Cold War raging, this was a risk, even for someone as privileged as Mr Tsutsumi.

After graduating from Tokyo University, he decided to conform – he joined his father's business and even served for a time as his father's political secretary, making friends with Mr Kichiro Miyazawa, the prime minister, who was then a young political aide.

The turmoil left deep scars on Mr Tsutsumi about which he writes in a semi-autobiographical novel, *A Spring Like Any Other*, recently published in English. It concerns a department store owner's attempts to reconcile himself with his life and his family, who all live in the shadow of a tyrannical father. At one point the hero says of himself: "It seems I'm burdened with an inability to commit myself which keeps me from belonging anywhere."

When Mr Tsutsumi senior died in 1984, his legitimate son, Mr Yoshiaki Tsutsumi, inherited the stuff of soap operas.

**Personal file**

1927: Born in Tokyo  
1951: Graduated from Tokyo University economics department  
1954: Joined Seibu Department Stores  
1961: President of Seibu Department Stores  
1975: Chairman of Seibu Allstate Life Insurance  
1987: President of Saison Corporation  
1989: Chairman of Saison Corporation

Other posts include board member of Keidanren, board member of the International Council of Modern Art, guest professor of Moscow University, adviser of Sotheby's Holdings and director of Club Mediterranee

joined almost the entire business empire except for Seibu Department Stores, which then consisted mainly of one loss-making shop in Ikebukuro, in central Tokyo. "The people at Seibu Railway thought the department store would go bankrupt. So they said: 'You take it,'" says Mr Tsutsumi.

To revitalise the company, Mr Tsutsumi says he had to try something different. He had earlier spent some time working for Seibu Department Stores in Los Angeles. There he saw chain stores in operation for the first time. These included JC Penney, the fast food group and consumer credit businesses. None of these then existed on any scale in Japan. When he returned to Tokyo, he realised what Seibu must do. "I saw the future of Japan in the US," says Mr Tsutsumi.

Seibu developed into a web

of interlocking companies – a department store chain, a fashion chain, supermarkets, fast food, food processing and consumer credit.

Later, as Japan grew wealthier, Mr Tsutsumi invested in leisure, including the Seijo Hotel, a luxury hotel in Tokyo, travel agencies, and a stake in Club Mediterranee, the French holiday village company. In 1988, he paid \$2.15bn for Inter-Continental Hotels, the luxury chain.

"When I started, this business was one-hundredth the size of what it is today. We are the only department store company in Japan to have succeeded with diversification," says Mr Tsutsumi with a smile.

Japanese magazines often describe the rise of Mr Tsutsumi in terms of a life-long rivalry with his half-brother, Mr Yoshiaki Tsutsumi, who regularly heads lists of the world's richest businessmen.

Even when the group's name was changed last year from Seibu Saison to Saison Group, it was seen by some Japanese journalists as a snub to Seibu Railway.

Mr Seiji Tsutsumi parries a question about family rivalry, by saying: "We don't compete directly. Seibu Railway is completely different. My goal was not to compete with Seibu Railway but with Takashimaya and Mitsukoshi [Japan's two grandest department store companies]."

Mr Tsutsumi admits that the circumstances of his inheritance fired his ambition: "I think what made us successful was the fact that we had very few blessings at the beginning. We didn't have much bestowed on us. We had a hungry spirit."

Today, Mr Tsutsumi acknowledges that Saison Group, like other Japanese companies, suffers from an excess of that hungry spirit. He believes it is time for Japanese businesses to replace a workaholic culture with one that would allow individuals more time for themselves.

He welcomes a recent appeal made by Mr Akihiko Morita, the chairman of Sony, the electronics group, who urged Japanese companies to stop seeking to maximise sales and profits and instead give employees more

pay and more holidays. Mr Tsutsumi has tried to live up to Mr Morita's philosophy – last year he retired from some top corporate posts in order to give himself more time for writing and for politics.

In practice, Mr Tsutsumi has found it hard to distance himself from Saison Group. He remains chairman of Saison Corporation, a core company. "I have delegated day-to-day management, but still I must still do some co-ordination between companies," says Mr Tsutsumi.

Mr Tsutsumi would have more free time were it not for the problems of Inter-Continental Hotels, which Saison bought from Grand Metropolitan of the UK in 1988.

The acquisition has been hit by unforeseen increases in borrowing costs and a decline in business travel caused by the Gulf war and the world economic slow down. It has made operating profits, but has fallen into the red after Inter-

est costs in each of the last three years.

Saison had hoped to share the risks and costs with Scandinavian Air Systems, the European airline, which bought a 40 per cent stake in Inter-Continental. But earlier this year, SAS, squeezed by financial difficulties, pulled out and sold its shares back to Saison.

Mr Tsutsumi says that other Saison companies are injecting new capital into Inter-Continental. Perhaps ¥100bn (¥247m) in total will be invested to reduce borrowings. The hotel building programme will be slowed down over the next two or three years. But he denies that the chain is damaging the finances of the Saison group as a whole. There are no plans to sell hotels to clear debt. "We are long-term commercial investors not financial investors," he says.

Mr Tsutsumi finds it difficult to tear himself away from the group he has headed for more than 30 years. On the day we



Seiji Tsutsumi: His family history is the stuff of soap operas

met, he had attended a meeting of 400 top managers of Seibu Department Stores. He said: "Mr Mizuno [Mr Seiji Mizuno, president of Seibu] told the managers about his plans for the new [financial] year. I heard his speech. I was just observing. Nobody knew I was there."

Nevertheless, Mr Tsutsumi strongly believes that he must force himself to stay away in order to make space for his future successors. Mr Tsutsumi wants to follow the example of Mr Soichiro Honda, the late founder of Honda Motor, the

Semi-retirement from Saison has given Mr Tsutsumi more time to write, under his pseudonym Takashi Tsuji. He has written more than 20 novels

## □ FOREIGN AID AND CHARITIES

## Growing awareness

JAPANESE private contributions to Third World charities are on the increase in what is regarded as one sign of the country's growing public awareness of global problems.

Although critics may contend that the response of the Japanese public is long overdue, there are several historical reasons for the reluctance of the individual Japanese to become involved in charitable enterprises abroad.

The refugee crisis of the IndoChinese "boat people" in the late 1970s, however, was the first event that pierced the public's post-war isolationist attitude to the problems of the Third World.

Several Japanese student groups sent volunteers to the refugee camps in Thailand. This activity created the foundation for the growth of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in international development co-operation.

There are now an estimated 270 Japanese non-profit organisations dealing with Third World issues, although this constitutes only 1.3 per cent of the total number of private foundations in Japan.

Many have been established by former student activists who believe that the government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme does not devote enough resources to grass-roots development projects.

Critics argue that ODA aid is mainly used to promote industrial projects that will benefit Japanese companies.

A shortage of both funding and volunteers, however, still presents serious problems for the Third World NGOs despite growing public support in recent years.

Although private contributions to Third World charities are approaching ¥15bn, a third of that amount is designated for the Japan chapter of Unicef and the Foster Parent Plan.

More than 100 organisations must compete for the rest.

"The average budget of a NGO is quite small, about ¥20m," according to Mr Hiroaki Yumoto, deputy director of the Japanese NGO Centre for International Co-operation, which represents 38 groups in the Tokyo region.

The financing problem has been eased somewhat by the creation, three years ago, of the Voluntary Deposit for International Aid, a postal deposit system to help Third World nations.

Under the system, Japanese can donate 20 per cent of the interest from their postal savings accounts for Third World projects. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) distributes the money to selected NGOs.

More than 60 Japanese participate in the fund and will give an estimated ¥24bn this year.

The MPT has become the biggest government financial source for the NGOs, exceeding

and collections of poems and essays. A book of poems was translated into English and published two years ago under the title *A Stone Monument on a Fine Day*.

He argues that Japanese business culture will change to allow other people to make time for themselves. "If Mr Morita had talked 10 years ago about cutting working hours and increasing pay nobody would have listened. Now people are talking about it."

It is hard for companies to cut hours in times of growth because they are busy; while in times of recession, companies are concerned about costs, says Mr Tsutsumi. Nevertheless, employers are beginning to act. Saison Group has this year established a new subsidiary charged with advising group companies on how to improve employee benefits and welfare for employees.

The worst difficulty is that there are many Japanese business people who don't know how to use their free time even if they have it", he says. Employers can introduce staff to mountain climbing and skiing and even reading but there is a limit to how much they can do before they are accused of "trying to manage employees' free time".

the small amount of money given by the Foreign Ministry. Some of the funds are used to attract personnel for NGO projects in the Third World.

"Although we rely on volunteers to carry out much of the administration, we need to find skilled people to operate the programs in the Third World," said Mr Hisashi Shibata, senior programme officer for the Japan International Volunteer Centre.

"They need to be paid because they often have their own families to support," he explains.

"It is growing difficult to find skilled technicians, especially when there is a labour shortage in Japan."

Nevertheless, a spirit of optimism prevails among the Japanese NGOs. "I believe that the country's prosperity is convincing the Japanese that they have a responsibility to areas of the world that are less fortunate," said Mr Yumoto.

"It is my hope that the NGOs have reached the turning point where they find wide acceptance and support in Japan."

John Burton

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## CREDIT AND CHARGE CARDS

SECTION IV

Wednesday July 15 1992

As a new generation of cards supplants old-fashioned credit cards in the UK and US, payment by plastic is spreading to more and more countries. David Barchard looks at prospects for the industry against the background of a slowdown in the world economy

## Revolution in plastic

THERE MAY be a recession in many countries across the industrial world, but it has done little to hold up the advance of card-based payment systems across the globe.

In countries where payment cards are well established, such as the US and the UK, a new generation of plastic card products, from debit cards to prepayment cards, is supplanting the old-fashioned credit card.

Elsewhere, the plastic card revolution is spreading to countries where cash dispensers and electronic terminals were previously unknown.

This spring Plus, the international inter-bank cash dispenser network, expanded into 12 new countries from Malaysia and the Philippines to Spain and the United Arab Emirates.

In 10 years Plus has grown to the point where it has nearly 200m card holders in 30 countries. It describes its growth as explosive.

Nevertheless the slowdown in the world economy has been bad news for the card world, judged against the rates at which payment card systems expanded in the late 1980s.

Visa's worldwide card sales volume of \$365bn in 1991 was a relatively modest 16 per cent up and MasterCard grew by only 12.5 per cent during the year to \$230.9bn.

Visa's market dominance looks unshakable for the foreseeable future. Though the gap between Visa (281m cards worldwide) and MasterCard (172m cards worldwide)

remains wide, Alex "Pete" Hart, the MasterCard president since 1988, has restored morale and a sense of direction to his organisation. MasterCard now has effective regional structures and it is moving fast to catch up on services such as international cash-machine networks where a few years ago it lagged well behind Visa.

On one market front, the debit card, MasterCard is this year making a bold initiative which, if it succeeds, could place it ahead of Visa.

Several Visa debit cards, such as Barclays Connect in the UK, have been up and running for several years, but Visa's debit card products are hard to distinguish from its credit cards. MasterCard has entered the debit card market much later but is taking a more radical approach to the challenges it poses.

This summer MasterCard rolls out Maestro, its brand name for a world-wide on-line point-of-sale debit card operation. It now has a network of bank cash-machines and retail outlets covering most of the US. In Europe, it will be represented by a sister scheme, EDC, the European Debit Card, set up by Eurocard.

The debit card has already established itself as the dominant payment card product of the 1990s with the numbers of cards issued rising rapidly. It offers the banks an easy way to reduce their processing costs and consumers seem to have accepted it.

Those who do not like the idea of losing a few weeks' free



.

interest may be mollified with a second generation of debit card products in which payment is made monthly; by 1996 there will be around 90m monthly debit cards in Europe alone.

By contrast, the credit card may be now on the way to becoming a niche product supplying a revolving credit linked to a bank account. Though a few banks and building societies do not charge an annual fee for their credit cards, their number is shrinking rapidly.

Consumers in other countries already pay charges, usually much stiffer ones.

They may end up paying much higher charges if some day retailers across the globe revolt against the present fee system and bring down the interchange system under which most of the commission a retailer pays on each credit card transaction by his bank goes to the bank which issued the card.

Even without such an upset in the economics of the credit card industry, some bankers think that the credit card may already be coming to the end of its life as a product. They foresee a shift towards gold cards to serve customers who want to borrow money on their cards.

Another response to the

changing economics of the card-based payments world is to farm out some of the operations involved to a third party, rather than try to do them all in-house.

This trend has been particularly striking in the processing of credit cards where an outside specialist can take advantage of larger volumes of business to process cards more cheaply than the individuals are able to do for themselves.

Attempts to beat Visa and MasterCard on their own ground by entering the credit card market by purchasing Signet, the Southend-based processing plant set up by the Access consortium, for £145m from Lloyd's, National Westminster, and Royal Bank of Scotland.

FDR, which now processes about 14m card accounts a year, is looking to expand in Europe. There are other competitors bidding for the same market, notably Soges of France (which also bid for Signet), but FDR has the head start.

In the US, there has been a steady withdrawal by banks from the processing market and also from providing card services directly to retailers. In their place new specialist third-party processors are emerging.

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Illustration: John Batten

describes fraud as an international moving bush fire, leaping from one country to another.

Global losses on fraud are thought to have passed the \$1bn mark in 1991. To combat losses on this scale, it looks as if the banks will have to invest in new technology and strike deals with telecommunications companies all over the world allowing them to handle more transactions on-line.

The fraud challenge has speeded up the adoption of new technology, but much of it will be ineffective unless banks and governments across the world agree on common standards.

Technology is also spawning a host of new payment card products. Ten years ago, pre-payment cards were virtually unknown.

Today, about 1bn are used world-wide each year. Applications are spreading from telephones to transport, such as road toll systems.

Mr Peter Harrap, the author of a recent study of pre-payment cards, expects around 1.7bn cards to be used by 1995 and thinks that they will gradually replace coins and low value banknotes in many everyday transactions.

This is good news for suppliers. Bank payment cards are

relatively uniform, but pre-payment cards are likely to be much more diverse, not least because it does not matter if one issuer's cards are completely incompatible with those of another.

Indeed it can be a positive virtue, making fraudsters' work hard and obliging a card holder to stick to a particular service.

Even more diverse forms of payment may lie in the distant future. The machines that identify card holders at point of sale terminals may one day fulfil the dreams of some rich North Americans and make cards unnecessary.

By 2020, a generation of super-intelligent terminals may be able to identify customers from their finger print or retinal patterns, check their account status with their bank, and simply ask them to sign for their purchase.

But that is probably a fantasy. Plastic cards are more than just extremely convenient payment instruments. They enable banks to carry their branding deep into the daily lives of their personal customers. Modern retail banking is unthinkable without payment cards and their influence is set to grow further in the years ahead.

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## CREDIT AND CHARGE CARDS 2

UK customers have become more astute about avoiding interest

## Future belongs to debit card

LESS THAN a decade ago, the credit card business was one of the most lucrative lines in UK retail banking. Today, the picture has changed completely. In 1992, the credit card operations of the larger banks are fighting to stay in the black. Some UK bankers can even be heard speculating that the credit card is in decline. The future belongs clearly to the debit card.

One symptom of the decline is a fall in the number of credit cards in circulation. In 1990, there were 30m credit cards in the UK, but the figures changed sharply when Lloyds Bank introduced annual charges. Now there are around 26m credit cards, while debit cards have come from nowhere to 20m in 1987.

Why have these changes happened? The recession in the UK economy is part of the explanation. Banks have been hit by shrinking volumes of business and the need to make provisions against bad debts. Customers have become more astute about avoiding interest by paying back on time.

"With no prospect of significant growth in the credit card business for the foreseeable future, everyone's attention is focused on reducing cost, and avoiding fraud and bad debt. We have started ahead of the competition and because of this we are now seeing the benefits flow through ahead of the market," says Mr Gerald Hawkins, general manager at Lloyds Bank.

One side of the card business has proved especially disappointing. In 1989, the Big Four piled eagerly in to merchant acquiring — the provision of card services to retailers — which had previously been handled by Barclaycard for Visa and Access for the MasterCard/Eurocard brands.



Turnover on Switch is now around £4bn a year

Last year the banks lost about £75m on this business and only Lloyds claims to be making a profit.

The losses have revived long-standing tensions between card issuers and retailers. Early this year the banks reversed their policy of offering retailers lower processing charges to win market share and raised their tariffs. The average charge went up from 1.6 per cent to 1.8 per cent of each transaction, provoking a crisis of protest.

Five large food retailers (Asda, Tesco, Gateways, Sainsbury's and Safeway) announced that they would hold out against the banks and establish a Joint Negotiation Committee.

In the US, most banks long ago gave up trying to make money out of merchant acquiring and left the job to specialist companies. So far these have not appeared on the UK scene.

Things could get still worse for the banks if some of the retailers get their way. They are beginning to press for a review of the interchange fee

system, the fixed charge which the retailer's bank pays to a credit card holder's bank. Interchange fees generate much of the income banks get from their card operations and they are usually set by the international payment systems, Visa International and MasterCard, and so are not subject to negotiation between a bank and its customer.

In the days when merchant service charges were well above 2 per cent, the existence of the interchange fee did not bother retailers too much. But some large retailers today have negotiated merchant service charges of 1.2 or 1.3 per cent — and most of the payment goes on the interchange fee.

A shake-up of the interchange system is unlikely to come quickly. The interchange fee is an international rather than simply a British way of doing things and politicians (with the exception of Mr Nicholas Ridley when he was at the Department of Trade and Industry) have been reluctant to interfere with it.

If the interchange fee system

were to break down, the economics of card issuing would be revolutionised. Card holders and the smaller issuers would be the main losers. Cardholders would have to pay more for the card services they receive and almost certainly the large banks would find it easy to undercut the smaller issuers.

Small banks are as yet undecided. They see credit cards as a good way to broaden their customer base. Bank of Cyprus (UK), for example, is using its Visa card to find new customers.

Meanwhile, debit cards continue to grow rapidly. Turnover on Switch, the electronic debit card launched in 1988, is now around £4bn a year with around 14m transactions being processed a month.

Mr Tim Green, chief manager of Switch Card Services, forecasts that by the year 2000 there will be 8m debit card transactions a day with about 70 per cent of adults using them.

"We expect debit transaction to overtake credit transactions in 1992 and to exceed cheque volume by 1995," says Mr Richard Beay-Smith, chief executive of Barclaycard.

The expansion of the bank card market has created some serious problems about card branding, especially ways of distinguishing credit and debit cards. None of the solutions on offer so far has been very elegant.

Visa has had to introduce a second branding, called Delta, for its UK debit cards so that retailers who want to take debit cards but not credit cards can do so. In practice, Delta remains something of an ugly duckling among payment card brands. Not all retailers understand it and few consumers seem to do.

There is even greater confu-

sion about branding on the other side of the fence where until a few years ago there was just one branding, Access. Now Access seems to be fading. MasterCard products abound and staff numbers at the Access branding operation are expected to be cut by as much as half in the next future.

If one of the Access banks dropped the branding, it would probably not survive. Possibly the four banks which own the Access brand will eventually sell it off.

Eurocard, the European affiliate of MasterCard which is prevalent, has never caught on as a branding in the UK, since British banks prefer a global branding.

On the debit card side, the pattern is less easy to predict.

The Switch branding dates back only to 1988 and though it was set up by a group of Access/MasterCard banks, it has as yet no international affiliations.

An eventual tie-up with Maestro, the MasterCard debit branding, and the European Debit Card scheme looks likely. Mr Ron Williams, the director of payment services at National Westminster, says he is fairly optimistic about the chances that Switch will join the EDC/Maestro group.

Just how Switch will co-exist with these brands if it does so, is hard to say. Possibly Switch customers will be given the choice of paying an extra fee to be linked to EDC and Maestro. But it is equally conceivable that the branding could start to go the way of Access.

Meanwhile, banks have got the green light from the Bank of England to securitise some of the credit card debt — an operation which is already familiar in North America. Each bank offer will be individually inspected by the Bank. The move will take some of the strain off the banks' card operations. Barclays, the UK's oldest and largest card issuer, looks likely to lead the way yet again.

David Barchard

## Security tops the list of technical priorities

## Forgers outsmarted

BANKS in Britain lost about £165m through card fraud last year, which explains why security is at the top of their list of priorities for progress in card technology.

However, security has a price. The most secure technology of all, the smart or chip card, still costs significantly more than the humble magnetic stripe (mag stripe) card recorded as it is made and, if, for example, the transaction limit was exceeded, it would be disallowed. Some argue that on-line is the only secure way.

Off-line working using a magnetically-striped card means that only a few of these checks can be made. There is a limit to the amount of information that can be stored and manipulated on such a card.

Chip cards, however, are able to store very large amounts of data in semiconductor memory, which is making possible another level of card security — photographic identification.

Retail outlets, police and the Home Office all have an interest in the development of cards carrying a photographic image. The Trustee Savings Bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland are carrying out limited trials with cards bearing their bearer's photograph.

There are only a range of semiconductor manufacturers available for image capture and printing. DataCard Corporation, which claims to be the world's largest manufacturer of plastic transaction cards and related technology, making more than 500m cards a year, has developed a process which makes it possible to print a digitised colour image of the card holder on to the card in a single pass.

The image and the information on the card is protected by a security overlay, which DataCard says is tamper-proof. The system produced high security cards, DataCard says, for situations "in which a physical breach of security could be catastrophic". A weakness, especially where the image is being used to protect a bank card, is that criminal rings may be able to find a member with an acceptable speed.

McCorquodale Smart Card Systems (MSCS), which claims to be the UK's only manufacturer of multiple-application smart cards, is working with a small computer company, CEM Systems of Belfast, to pioneer a new kind of visual smart card

technology.

Essentially, the image of the subject is captured from a colour photograph or video tape and stored in digital form in the card's memory. A clever data compression technique is used which squeezes the amount of information in the image into a thirtieth of the original space in two seconds.

The image is regenerated using CEM's proprietary card reader which takes only seven seconds to reconstruct a recognisable image of the card holder. Mr Trevor Crotch-Harvey, managing director of MSCS, says that in volume the reader would cost only £500.

One interesting advantage. People change in appearance with time. The MSCS system enables the image to be updated extending the life of the smart card and making the initial investment in the equipment a better proposition.

For the foreseeable future, however, it seems likely that mag stripe cards will have the edge. In the UK, on smart cards. This is because of their familiarity, low cost and the investment in processing hardware and software. There are, for example, some 45m ATM (automated teller machines) cards circulating in the UK at present. The UK banks have more than 14,700 cash dispensers while building societies operate a further 3,200. Cash dispenser cards can be used overseas in 110,000 Visa and 76,000 Mastercard dispensers.

These networks operate efficiently only because of the quality of the software underlying the system. Mr Steve Hilling, director of payment systems for Sema Group, the Anglo/French company which claims to handle 76 per cent of card management services for UK retail groups, argues that card technology has opened competition for the banks. "To keep their competitive edge, banks will have to sharpen up on monitoring market trends and market positioning. This, together with the advantages of further centralisation of processing to trim overheads, will speed the integration of card management and electronic funds transfer at the point of sale (Eftpos) systems."

Alan Cane

Asia-Pacific region poised for star performance in the 1990s

## Saturation problem looms

THE 1980s were years of expansion for the Asia-Pacific credit card market as ever more vacationers returned home having discovered plastic money as one of the greatest wonders of the western world.

This, combined with rapidly rising affluence and declining social stigma attached to borrowing, should enable the Asia-Pacific region to remain the credit card industry's star performer through the 1990s.

At industry leaders Visa International and MasterCard, the number of cards in the region reached 45.5m and 32m respectively at the end of September 1991, 17.5 per cent of their combined global total, according to European Financial Management and Marketing Association statistics.

Visa's figure increased 500 per cent in the five years through 1991 and is continuing to more than double annually in a number of countries, a company spokesman adds. Meanwhile, total Visa card sales in the 40-nation region jumped 28.7 per cent last year to \$37.7bn, more than twice the 1988 level and approaching 10 per cent of worldwide sales.

"The Taiwanese market is about to explode" because of financial deregulation and the expected addition of about 50 new bank issuers, the Visa International spokesman says.

In Japan, which dominates the regional market with about 80 per cent of cardholders,

annual growth in total credit cards averaged 16 per cent in the eight years through March 1991, according to the Japan Consumer Credit Industry Association (JCCIA). By 1993, credit card charges amounted to £23,000bn or nearly 10 per cent of personal consumption.

Consumer credit firms, bank affiliates and retailers are Japan's leading card issuers. The market share of banks has doubled over the past decade to about 50 per cent of the 180m cards in circulation. All leading firms now offer Visa and MasterCard memberships along with their own name. Visa says Japanese issuers are sending out its cards at a rate of nearly 1,000 per hour. Meanwhile, the consumer credit specialists have held firm, issuing about 20 per cent of new cards, while department stores, petrol and other retailers have lost market share.

Saturation is rapidly becoming a problem, however, with 1.5 cards in circulation for every man, woman and child. The result is not surprising: like Japanese companies in many other industries, credit card issuers are turning from a fixation on market share to improving profitability.

"Our growth averaged about 20 per cent over the past five years since we've made strong efforts to expand, but with cards now widespread, it will probably be closer to 10 per cent in the near future," says

individual proprietors and others hit by economic hard times. Of the total, sour credit card debt was responsible for about 18,000 bankruptcies, estimates Mr Paul Heaton, senior analyst at Smith New Court in Tokyo.

"And in the middle of last year the economy and consumer spending began slowing in response to the bursting of the bubble economy, and we're seeing a declining asset effect," he adds. "We'll therefore aim for good customers and increased use per customer. In Japan, the average credit card sale is about ¥20,000 versus \$5,000 in the US, so use here can rise significantly."

Mr Steve Norris, general manager marketing in the Asia-Pacific region for Visa International, says: "The slowing in Japan is largely due to a consolidation phase after an incredible increase in the number of cards over the last five years."

Young cardholders are the main focus of marketing efforts at Union Credit, another bank affiliate, according to Mr Mikio Okuhara. "They lead the market, but we're also trying to get people in their thirties and forties to use their cards more."

Widespread press reports that excessive credit card use was responsible for last year's surge in personal bankruptcies to the highest level since 1984 are accelerating the shift away from expansion at all costs. Still, the problem appears overblown, given that just 24,000 people went under, including

individuals to obtain outstanding card balances and presumably prevent consumers from taking on debt with one card to pay off another. Next June, the CIC will add data on housing loans and other items.

Many individual issuers also

have cut one-time purchase limits significantly to the Y200,000-Y300,000 range, including lower maximums for young cardholders.

Party in response to US pressure to stoke domestic consumption, Japanese authorities last month granted bank card issuers rights similar to consumer credit firms to issue revolving credit. DC Card is planning to begin offering such terms from autumn, though "there are some worries about people delaying payment", says Mr Fukuoka.

At the same time, industry officials concede credit standards have been slack in their rush to sign up card holders. Issuers have required little more than a name, address, income figure and place of work, says DC Card's Mr Fukuoka.

The industry is now rushing to install more point-of-sale credit confirmation terminals. However, the tenfold increase since 1984 to 80,000 units and planned doubling again within three years will cover only a fraction of the retail outlets that accept credit cards.

Another initiative involves improving credit reporting. In the past, issuers had access only to so-called black information on credit card defaults.

The Credit Information Centre (CIC) for the first time this year also is making available "white" information — loan values outstanding and repayment records among individuals who have not defaulted.

This will enable CIC's 800 member banks, consumer credit firms and car distribu-

tors to obtain outstanding card balances and presumably prevent consumers from taking on debt with one card to pay off another. Next June, the CIC will add data on housing loans and other items.

He has also set up a network of regional offices for MasterCard which have given it greater parity with Visa outside the US. Its fastest-growing region is now Latin America. His most delicate diplomatic task has been to manage the relationship between MasterCard and the German and other north European banks which dominate Eurocard.

There is still no sign of the north Europeans (other than the British) abandoning their cherished regional branding, but the working relationship between them and MasterCard has improved during Mr Hart's tenure of office.

Does the international payment system really need two different brands of card payment system offering services which in the last resort are mostly more or less identical? Mr Hart believes that two networks create opportunities for choice and broader market appeal than would otherwise exist.

In the short term, his goal is to reverse two decades of steady loss of market share to Visa. In the 1980s, such a hope would have seemed fairly far-fetched. But Mr Hart has evolved a strategy.

Since his membership over-lap almost exactly with that of Visa, the rivalry cannot be pushed too far. Anything that one system does is immediately demanded by its members from the other system.

"Duality (bank membership of both Visa and MasterCard) has been something of a curse which has spread across the earth," he told MasterCard members at the organisation's annual conference in Vancouver in April.

However, Mr Hart's third assumption is that with Maestro and the debit card, the era of look-alike matching products in the payment card world is probably drawing to a close.

Another is that MasterCard

will displace Visa only if banks find it advantageous to push its products first. MasterCard claims to have a slightly better yield than Visa on its cards: in the long term, Mr Hart wants to raise the difference to around 30 basis points.

By the time that point is reached, Mr Hart expects that some of the larger banks will be promoting MasterCard products rather than Visa.

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David Barchard

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## EUROPE

## Plastic takes over as a common currency



Visa and MasterCard have spotted the growth potential of Europe's travel market

CONTROVERSY may still be raging over the future of the Maastricht Treaty but European are already turning to plastic as their common currency. And with trade barriers and restrictions falling away, they may soon be shopping around from country to country for the best deal.

Certainly, the European Commission is pushing hard for a cheap, quick and reliable payment system to be set up across the borders of Europe. Derek Pearmund, Visa International's executive vice-president for member relations, believes that plastic cards have already established an efficient network enabling cardholders to access money internationally.

Cultural distinctions between national retail financial markets within the EC, however, may prove to be a stumbling block to the advances of the more ambitious card issuers. High telecommunications costs may also be an inhibiting factor, although Barclays' recent deal with BT in the UK to halve the cost of calls may help to set the ball rolling across Europe.

In the longer term, the creation of a single European currency could wipe out the profits generated by foreign exchange transactions.

Mark Sievwright, head of communications at Eurocard International, MasterCard's partner in Europe, warns that the banks may have to rethink some of their income streams. But card users can only make

a profit on incoming transactions, asserts Roblin Steiner, head of Andersen Consulting's financial services division. "A single common currency will enable companies to consolidate their operations as well as reduce their costs."

It cannot be denied that plastic provides one of the easiest ways to cross frontiers and break into new markets. "It is relatively easy for a bank to do business in another country," says Eurocard's Sievwright. "In the card business all you have to do is to set up a local language service bureau to sort out queries from cardholders and merchants." Indeed, Barclays Bank and Banco de Santander, one of Spain's leading issuers, have both ventured into Germany's nascent card market with Banco Visa, the biggest credit card issuer in Germany.

Germany, along with France, Italy and Spain, has contributed greatly to the explosive growth of cards in Europe. Both Visa and MasterCard-Eurocard expect that European card sales volume will overtake that of the US over the next two years. With nearly 60m cardholders and a card volume of 145m Visa boasts that it has twice the number of cards and twice the volume of its closest European competitor.

The race is also on to unlock the 120m debit cards issued by domestic schemes in national markets which are unaffiliated to either Visa or MasterCard-Eurocard. Italian card issuers CartaSi and Bank of America are the first in Europe to sign up with Visa to issue cards

with the redesigned Electron electronic debit brand.

MasterCard-Eurocard expects eastern Europe to play a crucial role in the development of its forthcoming Mastro/electronic debit programme. Earlier this year Komercni Banka in Czechoslovakia rolled out the first Cirrus on-line ATM network in Eastern Europe which may help kickstart the spread of on-line programmes across Hungary, Poland, the Baltic States and the CIS. "Eastern Europe has the advantage of seeing what went wrong in the West and learning from our mistakes," said Eurocard's Mr Sievwright.

But there are many obstacles to the integration of plastic into societies that have operated on cash for nearly 40 years. There are urgent telecommunications and infrastructure needs, and there will be no mass issuance of cards until currency becomes convertible.

"In terms of domestic markets there are some good opportunities," said Visa's Mr Pearmund but he warns: "They have to be very carefully weighed against cost and risk. It will take a while before any investment is covered." Mr Steiner agrees: "It's a nice thing to talk about but this is a scale business. Volume in eastern Europe is so minute as not to be interesting for serious players."

Kay Fletcher

Managing editor of *Card World*

Plastic fraud cost the UK industry £165m in 1991

## Beating the cardsharks



The Home Office favours photographs on cards to combat fraud

ASK ANY UK banker what the main issues in the payments cards industry are and he is certain to list fraud among them. Last year fraud on payment cards cost the banking industry £165m, up from £122m the previous year.

Though the UK has a mature payment card market, its experience is fairly typical. Criminals across the world are waking up to the fact that stealing money with a plastic card is easier and less dangerous than trying to rob a bank by more traditional method.

They have also discovered that because the payment card market is a global one, it is especially vulnerable to fraud. Counterfeiting in Hong Kong can manufacture phoney British credit cards for use in third countries where retailers will have difficulty spotting them.

Visa debit cards stolen from handbags or wallets in London can be smuggled across the Channel in a few hours to be used in retail outlets before they get on to hot card lists.

Two sorts of payment card are especially vulnerable. One is the gold card which has long attracted counterfeiters and collusive retailers. Until recently it was possible for fraudsters to use the gold cards of some banks to draw down quite large amounts of cash on the spot with no questions asked.

The other especially risky category is debit cards. A fraudster can siphon money directly out of a current account with a series of small purchases deliberately pitched below retailers' floor limits. Because the money is coming directly out of his or her current account, the distress to

the card holder is likely to be greater than it is on credit card fraud.

Still, card fraud has to be seen in perspective. The loss of 0.2 per cent of sales on card fraud is still tiny when compared to other losses by the banks or even to the 2 or 3 per cent of their turnover which retailers find goes on "shrinkage" - a euphemism for theft and breakages.

Since the banks carry the risk of any losses on fraud, naturally they see things differently from the retailers. "We have set up sophisticated authorisations procedures which are expensive to run. It is the retailers who benefit, very considerably, from this service. Is it not reasonable to request that they contribute to the benefits they receive?" asks Mr Tim Green, chief man-

ager of Switch card services.

Two years ago, the banks set up the Plastic Fraud Prevention Forum, chaired by Barclays. One of its main activities is to try and encourage consumers and retailers to be on their guard.

Card issuers now also accept that more transactions will have to be carried out on-line - i.e., with the terminal linked by a telephone call to a central computer. In the US, 85 per cent of card transactions are on-line. In Britain, telecommunications costs are much higher, but the banks are now able to negotiate that they may soon be able to offer a deal with British Telecom.

Early this month, Barclays announced an agreement with BT allowing retailers using its PDQ electronic terminals to make free authorisation calls from September. Barclays will absorb the cost of the calls, at present around 5p each.

Two years ago, Barclays Merchant Services, handled less than half of its transactions electronically. Today, the figure is 75 per cent.

Checking that funds are available and that the card has not been registered as missing or stolen is one side of the battle against fraud. The other is to ensure that the person using the card is actually the one named on the card.

Last winter, Mr Kenneth Baker, the then Home Secretary, held several meetings with the main UK credit card issuers to see how the fraud problem could be tackled. The talks centred mainly on the problem of identifying cardholders. Mr Baker and senior police officers believe that card fraud is closely linked with drug smuggling and that sophisticated gangs of thieves channel the revenue from card fraud to finance drug-dealing operations.

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## CREDIT AND CHARGE CARDS 3

Users in the US have become more sophisticated about choosing cards

## Competitive pressure rises

THE growing presence of non-banks in the US credit card market has loosened the banks' stranglehold on issues of credit cards and created a new class of credit cards.

Partly as a result of the increased competition, plastic card users have become more sophisticated about which cards they choose and how they use them, increasing the competitive pressure among

fees and interest rates triggered in part by AT&T's method of entry into the field.

AT&T initially wooed consumers by offering extremely favourable terms including waiving annual fees entirely for customers who signed up in the first year.

The banks responded by offering so-called "enhancements" to their cards, such as free travel insurance and frequent flier miles.

Banks were less willing at first to tamper with interest rates, which have made the credit card business extremely profitable. Credit card interest rates, which range from 8.5 per cent to 21 per cent with a median rate of about 18 per cent, have remained essentially static at a time when other forms of consumer lending such as car loans and mortgages have dropped to their lowest levels in more than 10 years.

A T&T is now the third biggest issuer of cards in terms of volume, and the Universal card controls close to 13 per cent of the total US market. And Sears is becoming an important player in the credit card business.

But there are many obstacles to the integration of plastic into societies that have operated on cash for nearly 40 years. There are urgent telecommunications and infrastructure needs, and there will be no mass issuance of cards until currency becomes convertible.

"In terms of domestic markets there are some good opportunities," said Visa's Mr Pearmund but he warns: "They have to be very carefully weighed against cost and risk. It will take a while before any investment is covered." Mr Steiner agrees: "It's a nice thing to talk about but this is a scale business. Volume in eastern Europe is so minute as not to be interesting for serious players."

Perhaps even more damaging, as far as the banks are concerned, has been the surge in consumer demand for lower

interest rates.

More militant card holders, however, became increasingly vociferous about interest rates last year and their cause was taken up by Congress, which considered legislation that would put a ceiling on credit card interest rates.

According to the Nilson Report, a California-based newsletter for the card industry, the amount charged to general purpose credit cards rose only 5.8 per cent last year to \$374.4m, compared with an increase of 15.3 per cent between 1989 and 1990.

Perhaps even more damaging, as far as the banks are concerned, has been the surge in consumer demand for lower

interest rates.

Although the proposed credit card interest rate cap failed to become a law, the adverse publicity, coupled with increasing competition and consumer pressure, prompted many

of the big bank issuers to start cutting their rates, at least for preferred customers.

Citibank, the largest US issuer with about 30m accounts or about \$47bn in annual charges, recently started offering lower rates to customers who signed up in the first year.

The banks responded by offering so-called "enhancements" to their cards, such as free travel insurance and frequent flier miles.

Banks were less willing at

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rates, which have made the

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profitable.

Citibank now looks at payment

method and usage to determine

interest rates.

Customers who have had trouble

getting approval for a standard

credit card.

In June last year, Citibank launched a secured card pilot programme and it is now expanding the test. Citibank's secured card carries a 19.8 per cent annual rate.

Customers deposit amounts

equal to the credit limit, between \$300 to \$5,000, in the bank in an 18-month certificate of deposit paying 5 per cent interest to secure the credit card.

Fraud is also a growing concern.

According to Citibank, credit card fraud cost issuers about \$1bn in 1991. In an attempt to combat fraud, Citibank this year introduced a photocard with a colour photo of the card holder bonded into the plastic on the back of the card.

In spite of the growing number of concessions credit card issuers are making to consumer demand, it is unlikely that these will have a significantly detrimental impact on earnings from this lucrative business.

Consumers, however, are likely to continue to benefit in the months to come from the ongoing competition.

Karen Zagor

## Image of store cards still dented by memories of credit surge

## Survival seems assured

STORE cards do not, at face value, have much of a future.

Many bad memories of the credit surge of the late 1980s revolve around both the stores with which credit could be obtained from retailers, and their expense. It was easy to build

up a heavy bill.

That led to mountainous debts. Store cards - the cards offered by individual retailers, usually in general only in the stores themselves - suffered a dent in reputation as a result, from which survey evidence suggests they have still not fully recovered.

A survey by Credit Card Software International (CCSI) earlier this year found that "high interest rates" was the most common reason cited by 31 per cent of respondents, given by consumers for not having a store card.

As a result British banks are now looking at other ways of establishing that a card is being used by its rightful owner.

Their dilemma is that many of the methods which can be used to make cards more secure may be more expensive to introduce than the fraud which would otherwise take place.

The two front-runners are PIN numbers at the point of sale and dynamic signature verification, storing information on the card about the way a cardholder signs his or her name.

But there are other possibilities ranging from fingerprinting to scanning the cardholder's retina with a laser beam. This method has been used in military establishments for years apparently without problems, but banks seem to think that it will not go down well with the general public.

The advantage of dynamic signature verification is that it is not intrusive and makes little difference for the customer to what happens at the point of sale.

But it has several snags. One is that it probably implies a shift from magnetic stripe to smart cards to store the information on micro-chip and a new generation of terminals to read the chips.

Another is that signature verification technology has not yet reached the point where it always gets things right. Trials suggest that a few bona fide cardholders would get rejected, while some talented forgers would get through.

So the banks could well decide to go for PINs, at point of sale. Some retailers in Europe already use PINs, apparently without problems. Consumers may not love PINs, but if they reduce the losses on card fraud, they will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

product which could only be used in one store, and so fees are "not even on the agenda," according to Ms Elizabeth Stanton of the Retail Credit Group. They could if anything harm the loyalty of regular customers.

A year ago there were several premature obituaries of

store cards as an ossified market, unable to compete with more flexible rivals.

However, the retail credit industry ardently denies this, pointing out that the cards are not intended primarily as a vehicle for lending.

Ms Stanton said: "The primary aim of a store card is to increase customer loyalty. An awful lot of people never pay any interest at all on their cards in any case."

But the survey also showed that store cards fall a long way behind other credit instruments.

Only 16 per cent of adults own at least one current store card (5 per cent have two or more), compared with 45 per cent who hold a bank credit card, and 74 per cent who have a current account, which normally will include a cheque card.

And a look at the figures for Marks & Spencer suggests that store cards are simply the application of modern technology to the usual service of offering regular customers an account. Store cards are now the most convenient method of doing this, and so their survival in form should be assured.

The card's proponents also suggest that the introduction of fees by credit card might boost the use of store cards. Mr Keith Douglas-Jones, a member of the Finance and Leasing Association, and marketing director of Sears Financial Services, says: "Bank card issuers have traditionally reduced annual fees, and have compensated by introducing fees."

This will lead to a store card renaissance, in those areas where the issuers provide a range of tangible service benefits for their customers.

"Store cards are used as an important marketing tool. Others have

passed their store cards to finance houses when the financial going got tough."

A year ago it looked as though farming administration out to finance houses would become the norm.

However, the trend has now come to a halt. According to Ms Stanton: "There was a

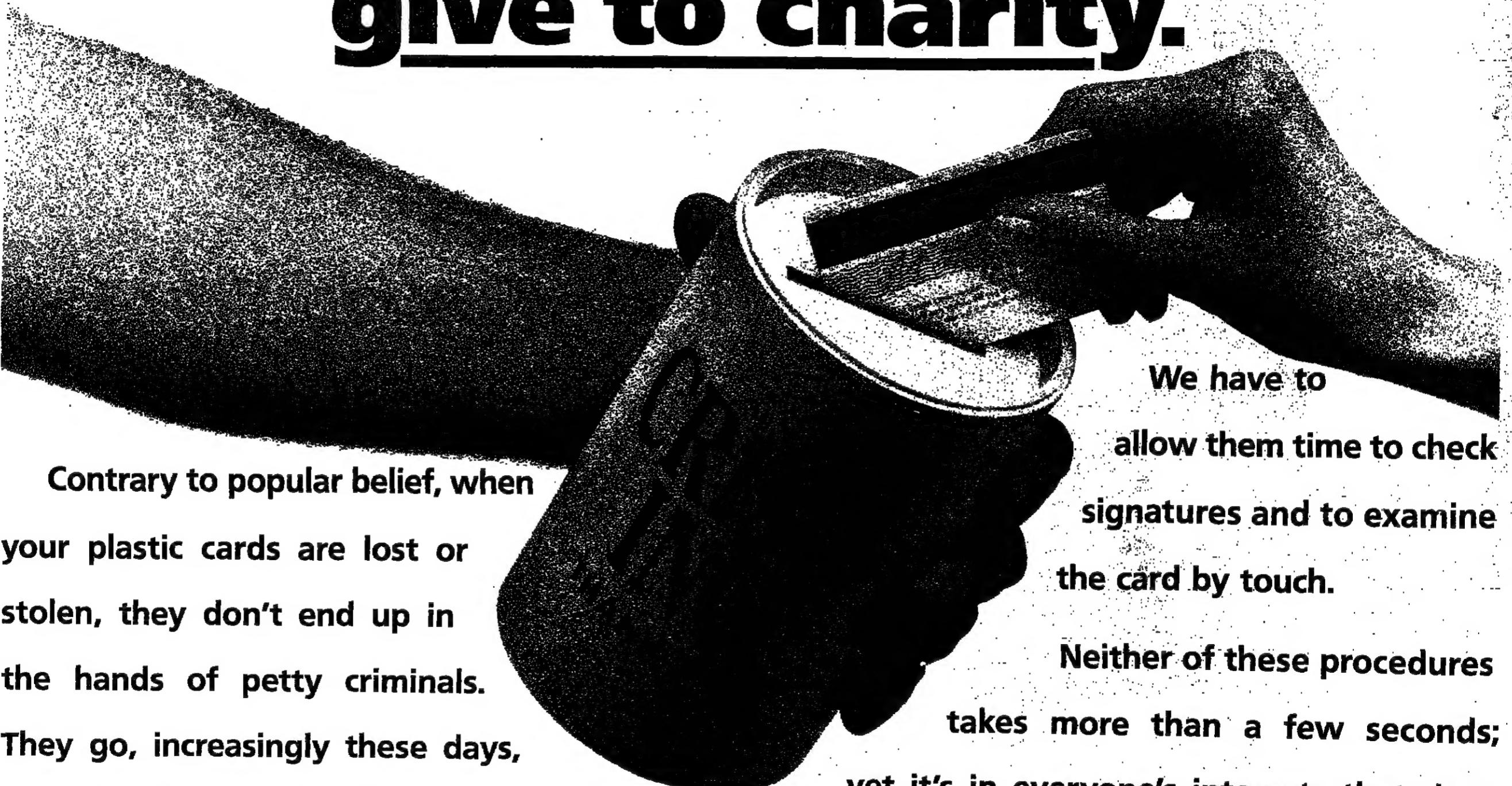
great switch starting two or three years ago but it's now settled down." She said companies which had kept their operations effectively in-house included Sears, Littlewoods, Kingfisher and the John Lewis Partnership.

The bigger names which opted to contract out their services included Storehouse, Burton and House of Fraser.

However, fraud has brought co-ordinated action from the industry. The problem - either at the point of application for a card, or by interception in the post - is growing, and the industry is addressing it via the Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance Scheme (CIFAS). This pools information by allowing companies to enter details of fraudulent applications with a credit reference agency. The applicant can then be subjected to more rigorous tests.

For the future, "smart cards", which would cut down on the risk of fraud still further since they carry a small amount of intelligence with them, are likely to be the next significant item on the agenda. The possibilities of the new technology for enhancing the cards' use as a tool for brand loyalty are obvious, and are being explored.

# **Each year a lot** **of perfectly honest people** **like you give more to** **organised crime than they** **give to charity.**



Contrary to popular belief, when your plastic cards are lost or stolen, they don't end up in the hands of petty criminals. They go, increasingly these days, to fund the drug and pornography rackets of organised crime.

The problem is growing at an alarming rate. Last year over £160 million was lost due to card fraud – more than was given to Britain's top three charities.

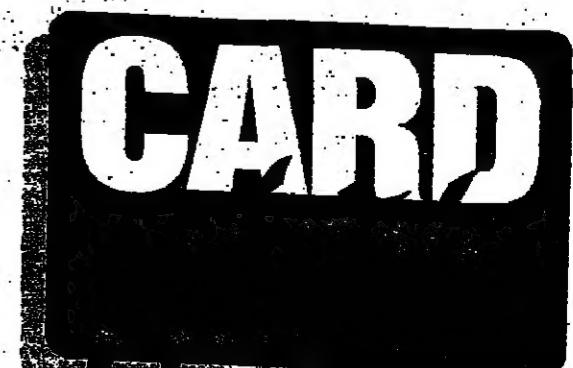
It goes without saying that each of us should look after our cards. But we also need to make it possible for shop and checkout staff, the best line of defence against card fraud, to be more vigilant.

We have to allow them time to check signatures and to examine the card by touch. Neither of these procedures takes more than a few seconds; yet it's in everyone's interests that they become routine.

Of course there are those who will tell you that card fraud is a victimless crime.

Not true.

With big-time criminals prospering so widely at our expense, it's society itself that is the victim. And that's something none of us can afford.



APACS Fraud Prevention  
It doesn't take much time to check card crime.